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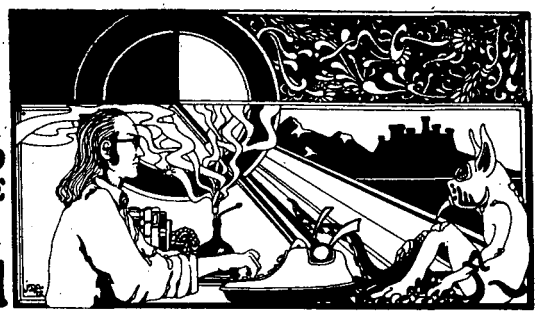
# TED WHITE editorial



NEW CONTROVERSIES FOR OLD: A year and a half ago, in the April, 1972, issue of this magazine, I published a letter from Mark Stephenson in which he rose to the defense of *Star Trek* after I had parathetically remarked upon that program in a book review in an earlier issue. Now I have two more letters on hand, the first of which returns to that issue and my editorial reply to Stephenson.

Les Cammer, of Santa Barbara, California, writes:

" 1. I have the April 72 FANTASTIC magazine next to me which I opened a few minutes ago.

" 2. Do you have a problem empathizing? I feel on the verge of insulting you.

" 3. The *Star Trek* that was on this evening wasn't very good, but watching that made me happier than reading your editorial.

" 4. *Star Trek* comes on here between 6 and 7 PM every evening. I am very receptive for it at that time. I suspect that if it came on between 6 and 7 AM in the morning, I might not even watch it. *Star Trek* is something that one has to be in the mood for. I've just started to get into it during the last few months but I feel I've developed a sensitivity to/for it. I'm sort of a Spock worshipper too.

" 5. The more I like Spock, the less I seem to like Kirk. Maybe the fact that I'm a chess player has something to do with it.

" 6. I think the worst *Star Treks* are the ones in which Kirk gets mushy with females. That ruins the whole thing. As far as I'm concerned the program is—or should be—about survival/exploration/adventure.

" 7. What would an improved *Star Trek* be like? Spock as captain and Diana Rigg as first officer?

" 8. I failed to mention that my TV is black and white. So that would probably account for my wishing for more colorful *Star Treks* at times.

" 9. I like Spock's strength and nonemotionalism, particularly in decision-making. Most of the people I know are at least a little confused. Spock's nonconfusedness is, to say the least, reassuring. I guess we all yearn to be strong during a crisis. Spock's eyebrow-raising could almost be a fetish but if he stopped doing that, I'd feel part of the program was missing.

"10. I wonder what an erotic *Star Trek* would be like . . ."

ALL OF WHICH simply goes to show that people like what they like, critics and criticism to the contrary notwithstanding.

When the April, 1972, FANTASTIC came out I was deluged with letters from *Star Trek* fans, most of whom simply didn't agree with my antipathy for the program. Few replied to my specific criticisms of the show; most told me that I had no idea what I was talking about, because *they* loved *Star Trek*. That there are still a great many supporters of the defunct series was made obvious both

(cont. on page 123)



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*Time travel—what is really involved? Don't we all use time travel to revisit our earlier lives via our memories? Gordon Elkund, whose "Iron Mountain" appeared here last issue, offers a fresh point of view as he describes the probing of an ambitious man into—*

# THE STUFF OF TIME

## GORDON EKLUND

### Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA

AN AMBITIOUS MAN is not an average man, whatever you may have heard, for unlike most of us he is not driven by a vast multiplicity of often conflicting emotions, but only by one. By fear. An immense devouring flood of fear that shatters and splits into so many separate channels that it would be impossible for any one man to chart more than a few of them. And remember this too. Fear is the most confining and selfish of emotions. Of them all, it is the single most dreadful. It squats deep inside a man and consumes him slowly and fully from within.

Alfred Newkom was one such ambitious man. Perhaps—although this is a difficult thing to guage—perhaps Alfred was the most singularly ambitious man ever to set foot on the earth. It is easy enough to think of other greatly ambitious men. Anyone can do it. For instance, history is saturated with great statesmen and soldiers and conquerors —the Hitlers and Alexanders and Napoleons and Abraham Lincolns. Ambitious men? Of course they were—all of them. And the boxers too. Surely there is nothing more obviously ambitious than a man like Jack Dempsey or Willie Pep who has pulled himself up from nothing to the point of really being something (at least in the eyes of his peers) solely because of his willingness to allow another man to knock his brains out. But it is actually hard to say about boxers, because many of them are undoubtedly driven by things that are not really ambitions. By hunger, for example. And everything and everyone else. There are a myriad of ways for an ambitious man



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to succeed in our society, for we have built an entire culture centered upon the notion that all good men are ravaged by uncontrollable ambitions for success and wealth and fame.

Yet, still it may be true. It may be true that Alfred Newkom was the most ambitious man of them all, for of them all only Alfred invented a time machine solely as a salve for his own burning ambitions.

It happened this way: Alfred lived at home with his son and his sign. The sign said, *Alfred Newkom—Free Lance Inventing and Home Repairs.* The son, Jeffrey, was the product of the first of two inconsequential marriages. The house was a small four-room cottage with a wide front porch and on the front porch was a big iron porch swing that hung suspended from the narrow overhanging porch roof by two thick steel chains. It was here that Alfred sat every day. Curled up. Tense. Waiting. Like a big cat poised to pounce.

Then one day it happened.

"I've done it. Jeffrey, come here. I've invented a time machine."

Jeffrey came running outside and saw his father sitting lazy and relaxed on the porch swing, his ankles crossed in front of him, his hands lying loose in his lap.

"Can I see it?" Jeffrey said.

"See what?"

"The time machine. No—wait. How could you have done that? You haven't left the porch all day."

"My time machine," Alfred said, sliding down in order to allow his son to join him on the swing, "is here." He tapped his forehead.

"How?"

"A time machine is not a machine but a way of thinking."

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"Have you tried it yet?"

"Nope."

"Are you sure it works?"

"Pretty sure."

"So when are you going to try it out?"

"Now."

"Right now?" Jeffrey asked.

But it was too late for a reply. Alfred was gone. He had disappeared suddenly and silently and not even a puff of gray smoke remained behind to indicate the portion of space he had previously occupied. Gone. With a sigh, Jeffrey proceeded to wait. Morning became afternoon and afternoon sprinted in turn toward evening, and the boy sat alone on the porch, watching the passing of time. Earlier, soon after his father's departure, he had moved away from the porch swing and gone to sit on the high wooden railing. He sat there now, his legs kicking and dangling. For a boy of his age, nine years, Jeffrey was quite intelligent and he had no intention of allowing his father to materialize abruptly in his lap. His stomach rumbled and grumbled. He wished his father would hurry up and come home.

At dinner time, Alfred reappeared, sitting almost exactly where he had sat before.

Jeffrey said, "Dad."

Alfred shook his head like a man rising suddenly from deep water. "Hungry?"

"You bet."

"Then let's get some dinner. I'm hungry too. I ate while I was there but it doesn't seem to have stuck to my ribs. In fact, I'm famished."

The boy laughed heartily at the sight of his father stroking his stomach like a starving gorilla. Alfred had not been eating much lately. Hunger had been as alien to him as physical desire. "Did it work?" asked the boy.

"You bet your boots it did," Alfred said.

Grabbing his stomach, Jeffrey laughed even harder.

Together they went to eat. They visited two separate restaurants and each consumed two separate meals. The food was good. The plates were wiped clean.

But this happened only after the passage of many years. Many. Because first Alfred was born and had a childhood and then a shivering flash of adolescence (which he hated) and then he went to college and graduated. These were normal times and Alfred did most of the normal things, for basically he was a very normal man, except for his ambitions. Note that the word used is normal—not average. Alfred was not average. He was quite tall and exceedingly handsome, with harsh black eyes and brown hair and a cleft in his chin, and although he did invent a time machine, he was far from a typical inventor of such devices. He did not speak with a stutter, nor was he absent-minded, or shy, and he possessed more than an average quotient of self-assurance in his interpersonal relationships. And his eyesight beamed unwaveringly at twenty/twenty.

After college, plagued by his ambitions, Alfred went into television. He had majored in English at the university, managed top grades for four years, but went into television after graduation because it looked to him like a grand place for realizing all of his various ambitions. After six uneventful months at tedious chores, he got to be a director, working for one of the smaller independents who did syndicated series



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for those local stations without a network affiliation (this was during the period when the networks were dying, so these independents had become quite important in the industry). Alfred was assigned a series and told where to report for work and given a handful of scripts—thirty in all—and told to film them. So he did, after skimming each script beforehand, and he shot all thirty episodes in a period of six weeks, not once pausing for a day of rest or hardly even a coffee break, and he had to use a different crew for nearly every episode because he had usually sent the previous group off to Palm Springs or Santa Monica (depending on who and what they were) for a forced rest. Fortunately, the series was an anthology of Western stories, so he didn't have to worry about killing his stars from overwork. Only himself.

The series—all thirty episodes—was brilliant.

He did it with his camera. In the editing room (they let him do that because it was too expensive to hire a real film editor), but mostly he did it with the close-up. This is not an easy thing to describe on paper but it's worth a try because it shows that Alfred was a good deal more than an ambitious man. He was also a very brilliant man, and this is an important thing to know. Television uses the close-up to a greater extent than its parent medium, the cinema. Most television directors, since the beginning, have instinctively realized this point, because a huge face on a Cinemascope screen is always going to be much larger than life, a bloated flesh-colored balloon dotted with marks and pocks, while on a television screen—even one of those forty-inch jobs popular during Alfred's time—it's just a regular-sized head (almost) without a body, while a long tracking shot of the Arizona desert or the Colorado Rockies, a moving and spectacular sight on the big screen, is just plain silly when squeezed into the twenty-one cluttered inches of the TV. Alfred did more than realize this. He did something about it. He shot everything in close-up. He shot thirty hour-long episodes composed of nothing but faces. This was something no other man, particularly in the technically conservative world of television, would have dared to try. And he shot only the close-ups too. He was smart enough not to leave enough other footage lying around so that an embarassed producer could later re-edit his product into something more conventional.

So, the thirty programs went out. The scripts were awful, the acting was primitive, and Alfred was brilliant. This was something the critics spotted almost immediately, as soon as the show had run twenty-four weeks and one of them finally happened to catch an episode, probably while flipping the dial in a vain search for a meaningful debate or a static play, and the dial got stuck, and before the critic could get it unstuck he was stuck so he wrote his column the following day and said the director (whoever he was) was brilliant. The following week, all over the country, the columns said that Alfred was brilliant—*rave, rave, rave,* said the critics. So, Alfred was suddenly famous.

And what do you do with a famous television director? There had never really been one before, so what they did was say make us a movie, Alfred. Ambitious, Alfred said yes yes of course,



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where's my script? Well, Alfred, what kind of script do you want? Who knows? Who cares? A script is a lot of words. I have my camera. But but— Didn't you hear me? asked the famous man. I said I can do anything, and I can.

It wasn't a big picture. It was fashionably small and the actors were fashionably unknown. The first day on the set. Alfred is ready. For three days he has rehearsed his actors. Now they are as well prepared as he intends to allow them to get. Which isn't very. Alfred gives not a damn for the players. It is the camera which has made him famous.

The initial scene is ready to be filmed. A man and a woman lie naked in a king-sized bed, satin sheets drawn discreetly toward their knees. Alfred directs: "Start with her navel and track backward. Then—"

"Can't," says the cameraman. This man, like most in his profession, is a wrinkled veteran of Hollywood. He claims to have started in the industry as an assistant director with von Sternberg on *Underworld* (or was it von Stroheim on *Queen Kelly?*). "It'll blur."

"Well, then start her at—"

"Can't. Impossible."

"But I—"

Somewhere among the three dozen technicians standing around the set, a man giggles like a little girl being tickled.

And that did it. And that was why— first the cameraman, then the giggle— Alfred's first and only film was a bomb. They had shattered his confidence that easily.

Why?

Well . . . actually, it's simple.

Because (surely no one has forgotten) Alfred was an ambitious man (not like you or me) and his ambitions were predicated upon success, and in his eyes, success consisted of watching his own glowing reflection coming back at him from the eyes of other men. And so that one spasm of giggles had been enough. That, and an old cameraman. A giggle. A refusal. No beaming reflection. Ergo, no success.

Next he became a college professor at a large university. He found that he liked to teach and his students loved to hear him lecture and sometimes, once or twice a semester when he was bold and lucky, he got to love one or two of them back.

Ambition ignited within him like a prairie fire and he swept, sizzling, through the groves of academe. Assistant professor. Associate. Star lecturer of the department.

And then the department got a new chief. This man, unlike his predecessor, was an ambitious man and he took an instant dislike to Alfred and called him in and asked him what he had written.

"I don't write myself. I teach about writing."

"I mean," said the head of the English department, "what have you written about writing?"

"But I—"

A friend explained to Alfred. Told him how what you say isn't as important as what you write, and a man cannot be a truly successful professor until he has written at least one moderately successful book. It doesn't have to be any good, cautioned the friend, but it helps immeasurably if somebody, somewhere, says of your book: "An important addition to the literature."



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"But I lecture and—"

"Damn it, Alfred, write a book."

Alfred wrote a book about the English novelist Joseph Conrad; it was called *The Reflection of the Mirror*, and it was good. Actually good. Books about other books are almost uniformly silly, but this one was almost as good as an actual Conrad story. Except: one fault. In analyzing Conrad's most important novel, *Nostromo*, Alfred was unable to come to grips with the title character. Nostromo is a man who lives totally through his reflection in the eyes of other man, and this was Alfred too, and he could no more come to grips with the character of the Italian seaman than he could with himself.

All the reviewers spotted this error immediately. And the rest of the book was so brilliant that they skimmed right over it and bore straight in at *Nostromo*, ripping the chapter into tiny shreds of pulp paper.

And Alfred resigned. And skulked away. No reason to explain why. He had failed again. As a director he had failed because of other men's myopic vision, through no error of his own, and this time he had failed because of other men's jealousy, and his own fault had been slight. But for a truly ambitious man, a failure is a failure, and so he quit.

Which brings us right to the brink of the time machine, for it was after quitting the university that Alfred became a freelance inventor, working out of his own home. At first it seemed as if his heart were not in his work. He was merely filling the empty hours while he licked his wounds and searched for another ladder ripe for climbing. People who knew him well sensed this. They would invite him over for lunch or dinner and feed him exotic foodstuffs (most of his friends were still university people) and he would occupy their imported furniture, curled like a cat poised to pounce. Everybody said this. An evening with Alfred was a nightmare of tension and anticipation. But he never pounced. He wasn't quite ready yet. He was still waiting.

When he pounced, he invented a time machine.

And, meanwhile, several pages back, Alfred is disappearing.

He has set his time machine so as to place him exactly ten years in the future. Alfred is not concerned with the past, and his intentions are clear. He has invented this method of time traveling for only one purpose, which is not simple to explain. Here is an attempt at doing it in a single sentence: Alfred has invented a time machine because no man has ever invented a time machine before and the mere invention will make him famous long after his own death, and with the machine he can himself travel into the future and see with his own eyes his own fame as it actually happens and if it doesn't happen to happen, then he can junk the machine and not suffer a true failure.

Clear?

Every man and woman on Earth has a succession of buttons in his or her head. These buttons are not yet known to science, but they are truly there. They might be termed dimensional levers. For instance, if the first of these buttons is mentally pressed, a man may grow to a height of ten feet, or fifty feet, or three miles, depending upon when he releases the button. The second button operates similarly for width. The third controls depth. After these, there are many more buttons, as there are many



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more dimensions, but Alfred is concerned only with the fourth button, the one that controls time. This button is his time machine. He pushes it.

Jeffrey disappears. Around him a world of unchanging, impenetrable gray flows like the lava in the cone of a volcano. No—not gray—for gray is a color, and this is not a color. It is an absence of all pigmentation. Not gray. Nor black. But nothing. Only Alfred himself retains his color, but he too is changing. He raises his hands and gazes at the backs of them. As he watches, his hands are wrinkling. The tufts of hair on the knuckles fade in color from rich black to dim gray. He lifts his hands and rubs his face, feeling the careful creation of a second chin, the sagging of the flesh, and the presence of new wrinkles. He lifts his hands farther, high to his forehead, and feels his hairline sliding slowly back from his brow. He is growing bald.

He releases the button.

Ten years have elapsed since Alfred's departure from the time of Now.

He is home. He sits as he sat when he left. Except: one of the chains holding the porch swing has snapped. Alfred falls from the tilted swing and lands uncomfortably on his rear.

Picking himself up, he enters the house. It is empty. He proceeds to the room that holds his library. He searches for the volume that he desires. Here it is. This is an encyclopedia dated seven years from the Now. Volume MYN-NOP. Item: Newkom, Alfred:

Inventor of time mechanism. After an early career, during which he distinguished himself as a television director and English theorist, Newkom devoted himself to attempting to unravel the intricate secrets of the human mind. After months of study, Newkom devised the means by which a man is able to travel freely through the various universal dimensions . . .

Alfred puts the book aside. He has discovered all that he is particularly interested in discovering. Success and fame he knows are his. And not a critical or unkind word to mar the ecstasy of his glory.

Alfred steps outside and enters his automobile. This is not the same automobile he owned in the Now, but it is operated in a similar fashion. He drives toward the city. The world appears not to have greatly changed in ten years. The air tastes a bit sweeter and there seems to be more open space. He proceeds to the major avenue of the city and notes that it has been renamed in his honor. Newkom Boulevard is four straight lanes of humming traffic, with trees and flowers spaced evenly between the lanes. Alfred is consumed by mounting excitement. His heart flips like the gills of a gasping fish. He watches the occasional pedestrian and notes little change from the Now. A few women are nude, but only the younger ones. The men, regardless of age, wear shorts. But it is a warm day.

Alfred goes to see the mayor, a young man. The mayor can barely restrain himself from bowing before the famous and great man. Alfred and the mayor converse.

"And I am truly the greatest of all living men?"

"Yes sir."

"Famous?"

"Yes sir."

"Has anyone tried to criticize me, say that my fame is not deserved?"

"No sir. How could they?"

"And I am a successful man?"

"As no one else in the history of the



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human race, sir," says the young man, who is mayor of the city.

After the meeting comes a dinner of grandiose proportions. The largest ballroom of the largest hotel in this very large city is packed with dignitaries. Among those present at the head table are such people as the governor of the state, the President and the Vice-President of the United States, and the Pope. It is the Pope who most interests Alfred. The two spend a great deal of time discussing the philosophical implications of traveling through time. At the conclusion of the dinner, the Pope bashfully kisses Alfred on the hand and thanks him (speaking Latin) for the immense pleasure of his talk.

Then Alfred is given his choice from among a line of nine women. He selects a blonde of considerable stature and beauty and retires with her to his suite. She and Alfred make love there. (And this is an important point, which must be emphasized. Please note: What Alfred does, from his point of view, is indeed to make love to this woman, or tramp, slut, harlot. Paid whore. He makes love to this lady. Most men, if confronted by a similar situation, would think in terms of screwing her or porking her or balling her or (perhaps even) nailing her. A few weaker souls might prefer to sleep with her, and it is conceivable that one or two might actually fornicate with the woman, though people who think in terms of fornication rarely do. But Alfred makes love to the lady, albeit this love is a lie. He does not love her in any acceptable sense of the term. He would like to. He cannot. What we have here in Alfred is a remarkable interweaving of cold ambition and blistering romanticism. The combination tears painfully at his heart.)

After making love to the lady but one time Alfred feels a great sense of restlessness. Also, for the first time since departing the Now, he remembers his son, his true responsibilities. A kiss full on the lips. A few fleeting words of fond farewell. Into the corridor, where the President of the United States hugs him like a brother. The Pope prays softly in several languages. The lady darts suddenly from the suite to throw herself at the feet of the only man she loves.

Alfred recesses the Button. He departs.

WIPING HIS MOUTH with a handkerchief, Alfred gazed happily at the interior of the second of the two restaurants.

Jeffrey said, "And that's the way it happened."

"Yes, every honest word of it."

"So, when are you going to do it?"

"Do what?"

"Release your method to the public."

"Well," said Alfred, "I'm not."

"Not what?

"Not going to release my method to the public."

"You're not?"

"Why should I?" Alfred shook his head like a very tired man. "I'm a success, aren't I? I haven't released it and I'm a success, so why should I release it? What more do I need?"

Jeffrey could not answer this, so he merely expressed a desire for a second helping of pumpkin pie.

And so it went. The machine, that is, which wasn't really a machine, or even like a machine, but a mental device, though the term *time machine* is so much a part of the accepted futurian nomenclature that it is almost im-



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possible to avoid.

What happened was that Alfred did not release his device (or method) (or time machine) to the public. He kept it for himself, and used it often. He would routinely disappear every morning at ten o'clock and not return till dinnertime. With the royalties he accrued from the syndication of his TV series, he had a large enough income to pay the rent on the house and purchase good meals at the two restaurants he and Jeffrey regularly visited every evening. And, of course, there was Jeffrey and his clothes and toys and snacks for consumption during his father's absences. Alfred never saw his friends any more. They did not mind very much or miss him particularly, since most had grown uncomfortable in his presence during the period when Alfred had lived like a big cat poised to pounce, and none of them were aware that he had changed since discovering his time machine. Once or twice a friend dropped by the house during the day, but Father was always, "Gone for the day," and it was just Jeffrey, alone, sitting on the porch railing, legs dangling, belly rumbling and grumbling, staring at the big metal swing as if expecting some strange creature to materialize abruptly at any moment.

As for Alfred: Where did he go? What did he do?

He went to the future. When he got there, he lived there. As simple as that. His time, of course, was limited. He had decided not to attempt to surpass the ten-year mark established by his initial voyage. He knew that far was quite safe, but any hour ventured beyond that point was a trip into the unknown. You see: what if he were to die? Alfred was well aware that he was scheduled to die at some moment in time, but he had no way of knowing exactly when. What if he were to travel in time past the actual moment of his death? His hair would continue to thin; his face and hands would wrinkle and crinkle. Then he would die, and once dead, he could never return to life again. That much seemed certain. So, after his first daring gamble into the future, he proceeded to play his hand conservatively. Each time a day passed in the Now, he lost a day from his futurian itinerary. It would take him ten years of normal time to use up all of his possible days. Then would be soon enough to think again of risking everything.

But actually, even considering this limit, Alfred had a good deal of time in which to roam. Only once did he consider going farther ahead and this was when—while traveling around the six-year mark—he thought he overheard a man saying, "Alfred Newkom—not so much—he stole everything from Einstein." Then Alfred did seriously consider an extended voyage through time. He knew he might die. But what an excellent way of committing suicide. He would die, but he would die naturally. Upon further investigation, however, Alfred discovered that he had misunderstood the man. No criticism had been intended Alfred forgot about suicide, and his future life resumed its previous gentle course.

Nor did he have any interest in voyaging into the past. Why would he want to relive past failures? The memories were horrible enough themselves. Perhaps it is this way: Tired men live in the past: ambitious men live in the future. But who lives in



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the present? Perhaps healthy men live in the present; it's hard to say. But somebody must.

Often, Alfred simply traveled to the day after Now. Upon arriving, he would read the afternoon newspaper, which contained blistering headlines and screaming articles regarding his revelation of a means of traveling in time. Outside, a vast mob would form, surrounding the house and begging for a glimpse of the great man. The mayor would appear to award him a citation. And the women would come and demand to be taken. Sometimes different women; sometimes the same. There were three or four who flitted through this portion of Alfred's futurian existence, revolving lovers, differentiated largely by the shade of their hair. And there was one other woman. A lover in the pure sense. The romantic sense. Alfred never touched her. He did not know from where she had come. To him, the woman was the golden lady, a princess, the queen of the sun and moon and stars. From afar, he watched her, and he told her that he loved her truly. She told him the same. He quoted from Shelley and Byron and Elizabeth Browning. One day, he knew he would marry her, but not yet. Not yet. Some things must be kept in reserve for the future of his future.

He never met his son during his travels. At first, this had disturbed him very much, and finally he had asked and been told that the boy was all right. Attending school. Playing in the park. With friends. All right, said Alfred. Fine. And he was satisfied.

Infrequently, as a change, Alfred would spend a full day in the Now. After such a day, things were even more beautiful when it came time to return to the future. But once there was an incident, and after that, Alfred stopped and began to visit the future every day, and even at night, in the restaurants, fear played tag with his heart.

The incident is important, so here it is:

He walks the downtown streets. The time is Now, and he is the Alfred Newkom of the Now. A failed film director. An unsuccessful English teacher. It is August, but cold, and the streets are empty in the hour just prior to night. This is a bad section of the city and Alfred cannot remember why he is here.

Then: Abruptly: "*Alfred—Alfred—Alfred—*"

"Ah—" turning "—yes—" still turning "—and how are—?" It is a woman. She leans against a dilapidated storefront. A sign squats in the window of the store, saying: Adults Only. The interior of the store is hidden from the street by a dirty torn windowshade. The woman is apparently in her forties, but she dresses like a girl of encroaching sixteen. Her skirt glides across thighs reminiscent of tree trunks, with thin streaking blue lines crisscrossing the flesh like a birthday ribbons. The woman wears a garter belt, but no stockings. Her face is painted like a Nineteenth Century clown, and black eyes gaze out from the pain like flies trapped in a flour bowl.

"Candy," she says. "Remember me, Alfred?"

"No—" says Alfred.

"Yes," says Candy.

"No!" shouts Alfred.

"Yes," says Candy. "You don't remember?—sure you remember—Mockley High."

"I remember. But you—you're not



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her—not you. She's—"

"Well, I ought to know who I am. I sure know who you are."

"I'm Alfred Newkom."

"And I'm Candy Duncan. And not all of us can turn out so good, dear. I mean, all of us have to live. I remember—seeing you in the papers—and you're—" her voice echoes the sound of a grader smoothing a gravel roadbed "—you're famous—probably rich—all in the TV—"

"No," says Alfred desperately. "I quit that."

"But who cares about quitting? I mean, really. Who cares what a man is except the man himself? Not me. What I want to know—" shaking a hip "—is if, considering the way you once felt about me, I mean too scared to kiss me when you wanted to, if you would mind parting with, say, twenty in return for my usual—"

"*No*," he screams at Candy.

"Well, if you'd rather—"

Alfred is gone. Running. The woman attempts to pursue, but his pace is too quick for her. She allows him to flee, shaking her head as he disappears around a corner. Then she sees another man approaching. She waits. As he passes, she suggests a date. Most likely, the man will accept.

But Alfred is gone.

And after this, he does not spend another full day in the Now. Not ever.

(Candy Duncan, you see, is the woman of Alfred's future. She is the one he chooses not to kiss, as he chose not to kiss her years before following the senior prom. She is the one to whom he has quoted Shelley and Byron and Mrs. Browning. How does he reconcile his future with the Now he has seen? He does not. He avoids the Now, reconciling the elements by his own absence. The following morning he proceeds to the day after Now and Candy is there to greet him. Candy: the golden lady. A princess. The queen of the sun and moon and stars. Alfred wastes not a moment in the act of fornication, and afterwards he explains that he does not wish to see her again. Candy is cast outward toward the cold, brutal, swirling winds of the future. And so it is done.)

Jeffrey missed his father. Before the time machine, they had spent more time with each other than had been possible for many years, but now the only time they were together was during their evening visits to the two separate restaurants. But that wasn't fun either, because lately Alfred seemed ill at ease, nervous, his eyes darting every which way, his fingers furiously tapping the table top. He acted as if he expected at any moment some great beast to come charging out of the kitchen to gobble him up. They talked then, true, but that wasn't very good either. Before the time machine, Jeffrey remembered that they had talked about everything possible under the sun. Jeffrey had been impressed by the way his father seemed to know a whole lot about a whole lot. Of course, he had been a teacher once, and teachers were expected to know a lot, but Alfred knew about things like Indians and outlaws and the Old West, things that were not necessarily a part of the general wealth of information possessed by an English professor. They would sit all day on the porch, getting the warming sun in the morning and the cooling shade in the afternoon, doing nothing but sitting and chatting. And maybe the day's subject would be Chief Red



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Cloud. Or maybe the James brothers. And maybe it would be both and everything else too. Alfred would sit on the porch swing, coiled like a big cat poised to pounce, but talking, purring, revealing the immense wisdom that lay beneath his vast store of knowledge. But those days were gone now. Jeffrey knew that. Alfred would return barely in time for dinner. Rushing to the car. Piling inside. Zooming through the city. Stop. Restaurant. Gobble the food. Go. The second restaurant. More gobbling. Home. Bed. Sleep. And all Alfred ever talked about was his life in the future, and that had been interesting and exciting the first few times, but now it was the same story every time, with the afternoon newspaper and its blistering headlines, the women all in a line, then the mayor and his citation. The story was a big bore, and Jeffrey knew it. The one truly interesting part, the golden lady, had lately disappeared.

So, Jeffrey couldn't help being restless. Sitting all day on the porch railing, waiting for his father to return. Several months ago he had quit going to school, because school only made him more restless. Alfred didn't seem to notice this either. He didn't seem to notice much of anything.

During these hours of waiting, Jeffrey had to do something to keep his mind occupied. It's not easy for a nine year old boy to do absolutely nothing. So when Alfred disappeared every morning, Jeffrey watched him go, and when he returned, he listened closely to every word he said, and sometimes a phrase or two would seem to fit into the overall pattern he was weaving, and he would lift the phrase or two and firmly encase it within his memory. And sometimes too, he asked questions, and once or twice the answers seemed helpful. He knew he was building something, weaving a pattern from these various bits and pieces, but so far he wasn't quite sure what it was.

Then there came a morning and he was sure he had it all. The pattern seemed complete. Then Alfred came rushing out of the house, late this morning, and he sat down on the porch swing and closed his eyes and wrinkled his brow. Jeffrey watched him very closely this time, and when Alfred disappeared and there was nothing left to show where once he had been, Jeffrey grinned widely.

*Yes, right,* he thought to himself. "Yes," he said aloud. "So that's how it is."

Alfred spent a routine day in the future. Newspaper. Headlines. Crowd. Women. The mayor. Then dinnertime, and back through time, only a short trip, one day, and hardly long enough for him to notice the colorless emptiness that briefly surrounded him.

Then home. The iron porch swing below him. The true world of Now. A gentle evening breeze softly floated across the porch and kindly stroked his face and hands. He was home. Distantly, he heard the noise of a neighbor's power mower, and nearby he smelled recently cut grass. Must be his own. Jeffrey.

Jeffrey? But where was he?

The porch was deserted. Alfred was alone.

He stood and called his son. No answer. Scratching his head, he went into the house. He went into every room, calling out, and peered carefully around. Nothing. Nobody. Always before Jeffrey had been sitting on the



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porch railing, awaiting his father's return. But not this time. Where could he have gone?

Alfred went outside and called Jeffrey again. No answer. Then he sat down on the swing and he waited. The noise of the mower had ceased. Night fell suddenly across the land, and still Alfred waited. He put his head in his hands. He rubbed his eyes thoughtfully. And he waited.

It was almost nine o'clock when Jeffrey reappeared. He materialized across the porch from Alfred. He was sitting on the railing, legs dangling. One moment he was not there and the next moment he was there. In the known physical universe this is an impossibility, so there could be only one possible explanation.

"No," Alfred said.

"Yes," Jeffrey said.

"No . . . how?"

"Have you eaten yet?" Jeffrey asked.

"No . . . how?"

"We could go now, if you want. I'm sorry. I couldn't tell time back there very well. It seemed to pass so quickly."

"Tell me," Alfred said.

"No dinner?"

"Later."

"All right—then listen."

JEFFREY WAITS until he is certain that his father has gone. But still he is not quite ready to make the long jump. He wants to be sure. So, first he gets the hand mower from the garage and tediously trims the front lawn. As he works, he is able to think, putting all the various pieces together once again, ensuring that he possesses all of the whole and not merely a part of the whole. By the time he cuts the final blade of grass, he is certain. Now he is ready.

He wipes the accumulated sweat from his brow and goes into the house. He dresses in his most splendid set of clothes. This consists of two brown rawhide cowboy boots, a pair of faded blue jeans, a red flannel shirt, and a black felt wide-brimmed hat.

Ready, Jeffrey goes to the porch and sits on the railing and closes his eyes. This is it. He searches his mind until he finds the fourth button. When he finds it, he pushes it immediately.

The world disappears. In its place is another world, one without color or light, but Jeffrey has no time in which to examine this new world. His own body concerns him more deeply. It is changing, growing, enlarging at a furious rate. His feet and head move rapidly away from each other. His skin expands, then fills with new flesh and bone. His clothes grow with his body, and this is good. Otherwise, he would soon stand naked in the emptiness of this world. He knows that he has already traveled far, but he is too astonished to consider stopping. After a while, the pace at which he is growing appears to slow. Then it seems to stop. Now Jeffrey looks down at himself. He is proud of the big, bulging muscles in his chest and arms and the thick black hair that grows in tufts on his hands and wrists. He likes the feel of his bristling beard against his cheeks and throat. But more than this. Along with the growth of his body, he senses a similar growth in his mind. He feels that he can think more clearly, with less struggle, as though a fog which has long lain across his mind has suddenly lifted. He sees more than he was able to see before. And one thing he is able to see



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is time. He realizes that he has traveled almost fifteen years into the future. It is time to stop. So he releases the fourth button.

He is home again. Strangely, everything seems exactly as it was when he left. Jumping off the porch railing, he turns to study the house. Except for some deterioration, dirt and flaking paint, it appears unchanged.

For a moment, he stands, not moving a muscle. He is trying to acclimate himself to this new world, but it is difficult because the new world is little different from the old. He wishes his father were here to share this moment with him. But Father is many years down the line. He has never come this far forward.

A shot lifts him from his reverie.

He whirls. In the street in front of the house is a girl on a big brown horse. A second shot follows the first, splintering the pavement as it strikes. Jeffrey turns and sees five, brown-skinned, brightly-painted men, hair sprinkled with feathers, riding toward the girl. She screams and turns her horse. The Indians ride past and pursue her down the street.

Jeffrey rushes toward the garage. He enters. Inside, instead of the car, there is a big black horse, already saddled. Jeffrey mounts the horse and urges it toward the street.

He follows the Indians, who are chasing the girl. He searches the saddlebags strapped to the horse and finds a pistol. He fires at the Indians and one falls.

But, still, he is too late. The Indians have caught the girl. She is removed from her horse and forced to ride with the braves. They hurry away. They are better horsemen than Jeffrey (who has never ridden a horse until today) and he is soon left far behind.

As the Indians fade into the distant horizon, Jeffrey deliberately slows his horse in order to conserve its strength. The land here has greatly changed since the time of Now. Instead of streets and homes and parks and schools, there is nothing but a broad flat plain. A chain of mountains has sprouted in the distance, the peaks rising easily toward the clouds, and the tracks of the Indians lead in this direction. Jeffrey follows.

An hour passes. He rides. Another hour is gone. Still, he follows. Once a grazing herd of bison crosses his path and he must wait for them to pass before continuing. They trample the Indians' trail and he wastes several minutes before finding the tracks again.

It is dark when he reaches the end of the trail. The Indians have led him almost to the first foothills of the mountains. When Jeffrey sees a blazing campfire flickering in the night, he dismounts and leads his horse by hand. He approaches the fire. There is a scrub tree and he ties the horse loosely to a lower branch. He carries the pistol in his right hand. When he is very close to the fire, he drops to his knees and crawls forward. He sees the Indians now. Four of them. Sitting in a circle around the fire. The girl is with them. When he senses that he has come as far as he is apt to come undetected, he stands and fires a warning shot.

One Indian reaches for a rifle. The others freeze. Jeffrey shoots the one who has moved. The others remain still.

"Come here," he tells the girl.

She comes toward him.

"My horse is tied to a tree farther



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back. Go get it."

The girl obediently goes while Jeffrey covers the three remaining Indians with his pistol. When she returns with the horse, they mount together and ride toward the house.

When they arrive, Jeffrey tells the girl to go into the house and wait for him. He takes the horse into the garage and prepares it for the night. Back to the house and he finds the girl sitting alone in the dark. He switches on a light and tries the television, but there is neither picture nor sound.

He waits. He asks the girl her name and she tells him. He asks where she lives and she says a ranch two miles down the road. He cannot think of anything else to ask her. He is bored. He misses his father. He considers trying to join the Indians, but they would undoubtedly kill him now. He regrets having rescued the girl. It is very dark, very late. He should have let the Indians have her. She is useless to him.

Excusing himself, he goes outside. As soon as he steps through the door, he hears the heavy pounding of hooves against pavement. The Indians have come for him. He does not feel like fighting any more. It is too late for that. Instead, he sits on the railing. Closes his eyes. And pushes the button.

Soon, Jeffrey is home again.

"And that's all?" Alfred asked him.

"That's all."

"But—" Alfred said. "But why?"

They were sitting together on the porch swing. It rocked gently beneath their combined weight. They were sitting very near to each other, father and son. It had grown very cold but neither seemed to notice.

"There was a reason," Jeffrey said. "But I can't seem to remember it now. I could think better back then. Remember, I'm only nine years old."

"I know," Alfred said. "Sometimes I forget."

"But I think I was homesick."

"Homesick," said Alfred. He put his face in his hands. He was not crying. But he had his face in his hands.

"It wasn't real," Jeffrey said. "I'm beginning to see now. Can you see it too? You went to your future; I went to my future. But neither one was anything but a dream. The future of our dreams. That's why I didn't like it. I wanted it to be real, but all it was was cowboys and Indians. It was just silly. Now I forget."

Alfred did not reply. His face was buried very deeply in the palms of his hands. Jeffrey stood and went into the house and left his father alone.

Truly alone, but Alfred could not cry. He just say on the porch, the swing rocking beneath him, the cold wind flowing uncreasingly around his body, and as he sat, slowly, carefully, certainly, his muscles began to tense. His legs curled. His back arched.

When Jeffrey returned, he saw his father sitting on the porch swing, coiled like a big cat poised to pounce.

"Let's eat," said Alfred.

Jeffrey sat next to him. "Sure," he said.

THE FOLLOWING DAY, Alfred goes to a nearby gymnasium. He talks to a big man known as the trainer. He says: "I'm strong. Young. At least I'm not old. I want you to teach me how to box. Can you do that? I want to be a top fighter."

"I can make you into a very good boxer," the trainer says.

(cont. on page 65)



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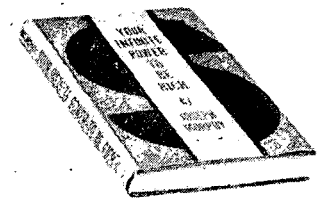
**Dr. Joseph Murphy, Minister of the Church of Divine Science, Shows You —**

# HOW TO PRAY AND GROW RICH!



We have been instructed by Dr. Joseph Murphy to give you the most exciting news you've ever heard — news of his amazing discovery of: **how to pray and grow rich!**

And Dr. Murphy promises you results not in a year — not in a month — not in a week — but immediately. Yes, says Dr. Murphy, "my prayer techniques will bring you immediate results!"

And best of all, there's no need to make any choices between any particular blessings you desire, for, as Dr. Murphy says, "you can be rich beyond limitation, and never have to choose again!"

You say this is too much for you to believe . . . that it's too good to be true? Well then, can you explain the astonishing things that happened after people used Dr. Murphy's prayer techniques? Can you explain —

(1) how numerous people make use of a certain formula for paying bills with marvelous results (p. 37)

(2) how a poverty-stricken couple received $10,000 "out of the blue" in response to their request (p. 25)

(3) how a man was able to triple his income in three months with a certain 28-word prayer that takes only ten seconds to repeat (p. 98)

(4) how L.T. used a one sentence prayer to rise from a job as an office boy to the owner of a 50 million dollar company (p. 178)

. . . or explain any one of the scores of wonderful things that happened to people who used Dr. Murphy's prayer techniques!

But we assure you that you won't be able to explain a single one of these mysterious "answered prayers" — you won't that is, until you read Dr. Murphy's thrilling new book "YOUR INFINITE POWER TO BE RICH" . . .

● On page 6 of Dr. Murphy's book, you will find these exciting words:

"All of the case histories presented in my book are of men and women who became rich by using the mental and spiritual laws described in it . . . these people belong to ALL religious denominations . . . they come from every income bracket and social level. All of these people have amassed great wealth!"

● On page 24, you'll read of a woman out of work, trying to support three children, with the bills piling up rapidly. No sooner did she utilize a single prayer given to her by Dr. Murphy than **a surprise gift of $5,000 in cash came out of the blue**, from an almost forgotten relative she had not seen for 15 years!

● On page 98, you'll discover how a working man **TRIPLED** his income in just three months, through the power of a certain prayer. This prayer contains 28 words. It takes only ten seconds to repeat. **You will find this prayer given word for word in the book.**

● On page 109, you'll read the true story of Maria, a little 8-year-old Spanish girl in New York, who wanted nothing in all the world more than a new bicycle. Her parents could not afford such a gift, but Dr. Murphy, who was then her next-door neighbor taught her how to Ask . . . **and her prayer was answered . . . she got her brand-new bicycle ONE DAY LATER.**

**THERE IS NOTHING IN LIFE THAT CANNOT BE YOURS, IF YOU KNOW HOW TO ASK FOR IT —**

These are only a brief sample of the scores of true, heart-warming and moving case-histories of the power of Living Prayer in action. Dr. Murphy's book, called "YOUR INFINITE POWER TO BE RICH", gives you the full techniques with which you can contact the Power capable of answering your every need.

You will find these powerful prayer-techniques truly beautiful, reverent and inspiring. **And you will find out for yourself that — incredible as it may seem — THESE PRAYERS DO WORK.** They ARE answered! Time and time again, skeptics have tried — simply tried — and found to their utter amazement that Dr. Murphy truly has in his hands the lost key to a Bible secret forgotten for ages.

We do NOT expect you to take our unsupported word for this. We urge you to PROVE TO YOURSELF, our words are true. We want to put a copy of Dr. Murphy's book into your hands. **All we ask is that you TRY — just try — using one of these prayers.** Fill out and return the coupon below.

**MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY —**

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Gentlemen: Please rush me Dr. Joseph Murphy's wonderful book **Your Infinite Power To Be Rich.** I understand this book is mine for only $6.95 complete. I will examine this book for a full 30 days entirely at your risk. If at the end of that time I am not satisfied I will simply return the book for every cent of my money back.

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# A WITCH IN TIME

*Janet Fox makes her debut in these pages with an extraordinary tour-de-force of fantasy in which we meet (but not for the last time!) Arcana the witch-woman, and follow her on a quest to the core of Time itself . . .*

## JANET FOX

### Illustrated by MICHAEL NALLY

THE GUTS OF THE CITY, the labyrinthine network of sidestreets and half forgotten alleyways, stirred with life even as the dayside city slept. An aged whore leaned out of a doorway where the smell of piss hung strongly in the air, her shapeless mouth drawn up into a withered grin as if someone had tightened the string of a wellworn leather pouch.

"By Xesis, that'd take the lust out of a man, just the sight of her, let alone the smell."

His companion let the remark pass, as he often did when he was following his own oblique thoughts. "Don't let anyone come too close by you here. Babes in their mother's arms are weaned on purse-snatching."

A lean man shouldered by them in the narrow alley where dampness beaded the stones. His face in the dull green glow of moonlight was crossed with a wide silvery scar that led into an eye that was only an empty sac of puckered flesh.

Wyle shuddered. "In this place they play rough. I hope we can soon find the one the old toad wants."

"We will. I've seen her often hereabouts, prowling the streets or running with a pack."

They continued their progress between mouldering buildings that jostled each other for space. Balconies jutted out over the street from which the house slops might conveniently be emptied. They passed the inert body of a man, who was either drunk or dead (in this place it hardly mattered). Alek said something under his breath and pushed Wyle into the side of a building. A circle of small figures was gathered in the street, grotesque with bony elbows and knees in awkward positions and ragged garments flapping around their bodies. They seemed to playing a game as they shrieked and pounded each other. Alek motioned him forward, and Wyle saw, as they drew closer, a band of street urchins, gambling and squabbling over a small pile of treasure that must have been loot. A scrawny girl, with uncut shag of hair that turned blue/black/violet as she moved in the dim light, squealed as the die fell and with a quick gesture snatched up a golden bracelet and an empty silk



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purse.

"That one," directed Alek and the two men ran forward. The children took to their heels, disappearing into alleys, doorways, the foul-smelling shadows themselves. Wyle saw the girl slip into an almost hidden sidestreet, half blocked by a fallen and decayed house. "Haste. She moves through this dung heap like a swallow through air." They explored the turnings of the narrow way but could not find where she had gone.

"There," said Alek and he was pointing to the ground where lay a circle of gold. "All we need to do is bide in the shadows awhile." Alek's narrow face radiated a tense happiness.

Wyle wasn't so sure his partner was right, and his muscles were beginning to complain of his cramped posture beneath a broken stairway when a small noise alerted him. Bending low to the ground and constantly turning her head as she looked and listened acutely, the girl searched for the bracelet. Her hand was just closing over the golden circle when Wyle, sneaking up behind her, grabbed her arm. "I've been stabbed!" he roared as something tore at his face. The flesh in his grasp was electric; it writhed, twisted. . .something like a trap closed on his fingers. By this time he had let go, but Alek had both hands on the girl's throat and was squeezing.

"Alek, let go," said Wyle without much conviction as he nursed his lacerated hand. "The frog-face wants something more than a corpse, I'll wager. We'll not collect our wages this way."

"Tis said this Arcana is a witch and I

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don't want her putting any of her spells on me."

"Tis said by washerwoman and puling old men," laughed Wyle. "Come now, Man, she's turning blue."

ARCANA FELT THE WORLD returning by slow stages. Only it was upside down. Her throat was constricted with bright bands of pain and below her head two bootheels rang on the pavingstones. She was being carried like a sack and was very uncomfortable but she decided it might be best to feign unconsciousness, then surprise them when her feet touched the ground. *If only I hadn't come back for the bracelet.*

The city began to take on a new aspect: streets widened, dwellings became newer and well-cared for, built with space between them. *What a waste,* thought Arcana. *There are no hiding places. Where can the people of this sector hide when the guards are after them?*

She felt herself carried through a door and closed her eyes as she was lowered to a smooth, cold floor. She would count ten slowly, open her eyes for a look, then run. Her eyes opened as she was scrambling to her feet, but a quick look showed her that she was alone in the room. There were two doors, both locked and a window, too high and narrow.

The room she found herself in was huge with a vaulted ceiling and a floor of dark wood polished to mirror surface. The tapestries that softened the walls were woven in vibrant colors in the images of huntsmen, stags, warriors, maidens, and unicorns that moved as if with life when the draft along the cold walls stirred them subtly. The furniture intimidated her; delicate chairs of exotic wood handrubbed until they glowed like jewels forbade even the thought that anyone might sit in them, especially Arcana in her ragged black shirt and trousers, smelling richly of life on the street.

A tray of food was on one of the tables and after sniffing it to see if she could detect poison, she ate, tearing meat off the bones and stuffing her mouth with fresh fruit as if someone was waiting to snatch it away. She was wiping the grease from around her mouth with a ragged sleeve when the door opened. Two panting servants staggered into the room, their arms extended to form a chair, and between them they carried something. . .a man, his body grown gross with age and gluttony. His neckless head sprouted from the collar of a burgundy robe as though someone had dressed a frog in velvet. Brown spots mottled his fragile skin and his eyes swam in rheum.

With a grunt of relief, the servants deposited this mound of sentient garbage in a loveseat of emerald brocade. A smaller chair would have been crushed under that weight.

"My little dear, come closer. So that I may see you. My old eyes. . ."

Out of the girl's mouth came easily a spate of obscenities (On close summer nights she had often sat below the balconies of the local whorehouse where the girls had appeared in the dusk like pale, parasitic flowers). Wyle and Alek had entered silently to stand behind Arcana but only Wyle laughed.

"Bring the witchlet closer. So that I may see her."



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She was shoved almost into the soft bulk of the old man's belly. "Yesss, Arcana, Guardian of the Violet Door." His breath was the slime on the surface of stagnant ponds and his voice resonated throught the layers of fat like music in some obscene instrument.

"I've heard of such a door," said Arcana, a guileless look appearing all too naturally upon her young face. "And many another such tale as old women tell in their idle moments."

The old man called a servant who brought him a garnetwood chest, carved in a disquieting pattern of flowers, fruit and snakes. "Here. Look at this," he said opening the box thrusting it forward in his shaking hands.

Wyle pushed her forward again and she ground her teeth together as if wishing to bite yet not quite daring to. Then her gaze entered the chest and stayed there. Something was there that was certain. But she couldn't make sense of it. A numbness grew behind her eyes and she jerked as if a cold hand had touched her. The fat man shut the box with a click, turning an ornate golden key. Arcana squeezed her eyes shut and shuddered. "What did you do? What have you taken from me?"

"How quickly you. Put your finger on it," said the old man and laughed so hard that he began to cough and wheeze, the phlegm in his throat rattling nastily. "You shall have it back. When you return. If you have done well, Sweeting. I have heard it told that the violet door opens. All ways—even into Time's Center.

"You say nothing," he continued. "I see you know the place. Only someone like me. Could appreciate the gifts. That such a land can bestow—eternal youth. And happiness. It is for this. That you will bargain. With the Time Lords."

The rulers of Time, I can't—"

"Oh but you must do it. For me, my Pretty." His thumb and forefinger pinched Arcana's cheek with more than playfulness. She looked at the carven box and felt mortality slip down around her like a cumbersome garment.

"And you, Alek, and you, Wyle. Will go with her. Do not let her fail. With eternal youth and happiness. I will not need my house. My treasures. They will. Be yours."

ARCANA LED THE WAY back through her maze of alleys. Inside the ruined shell of a stone building she entered a gap between two fallen pillars and scraped a pile of rubble off a wooden trap door. There was a straight drop of about seven feet and then a tunnel that slanted downward. A damp wind blew perpetually through the passageways and at times they were crawling on stomachs and elbows through incredibly narrow places and at others they passed through sticky webs that clung gauzelike to their faces (they only imagined the spiders).

"Here." Arcana tossed the word carelessly into dead silence, but they could see nothing.

Blindingly: a hairline crack of intense pink-violet. And then, seeing only the radiance with patterns overlaid by the weakness of their eyes, they went through the violet door. And shrill shrieks, a landscape of broken glass, bright & yellow & sizzling, smell and



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feel of wet fur—(all this and more) spun through their fragile and overloaded sensory equipment.

The sun (if it *is* the sun) stands still in Time's Center, giving off a clear and steady illumination. Arcana and her companions stand on a plain of white crystals, a field of warm, unmelting snow. As they move across this timescape, the smooth granules slip back into their footprints as if no one had ever passed this way. Arcana is remembering a face, immobile, as if abraded from stone. The expression of this face will be patient beyond belief.

"What do you see?" asks Wyle.

"Nothing. I was just trying to recall something. I don't think it was important."

They wander about disorientedly on the shining plain; Alek sees a tree and they make for it as the only landmark on a barren horizon. As they stand beneath the bare and crooked branches, a timewind causes buds to unfurl into fresh green leaves, and as suddenly shrivel, die and fall. Arcana remembers that she will walk down the leisurely paths of an artificial garden of some rigid material, made by a craftsman who had a passion for detail. "I know were to find them, "says Arcana. "I remember it—no—I mean I'm remembering what will happen. Can't you?"

"Wait. A little," says Wyle, "but I can't—it's all a jumble."

"This place has addled your minds," says Alek, the barely suppressed look of fear on his acid face betraying him. "No one can remember the future."

"Perhaps not, but my memory has shown me the way to a Time Lord's castle." She strides out boldly, knowing that they will follow her, but though some of the future lies in her memory, it is fragmentary, imperfect, mixed in with a chaotic past. It becomes frightening to think of it, so she concentrates on walking.

The sun vanishes—a wind, blowing in all directions at once tears at clothing, hair; tosses debris into their faces until in the darkness they call out and try to reach one another. Arcana stumbles against someone; she reaches out and clasps his hand. The flesh is solid to the touch, then melts like wax against her fingers, growing smaller, bonier. Crooked fingers clutch her hand. The wind screams.

When Arcana opens her eyes she is confronted by a stranger, an ancient man with sparse white hair and cheek and jawbone thrusting out against brown-paper skin.

"Alek!" shouts Wyle and "Alek?" as he begins to know the old man's face, the mouth twisting in the familiar bitter smile.

"Give my love to the fat frog," he says, "and use his money better than he knew how to."

Arcana holds the crooked hand of a corpse, and reluctantly she lets it go. "I would return now," says Wyle, "so that another old man can know what it is to die." He mutters the curses that serve him for tears.

"He was caught in a freak vortex of the timewind," says Arcana. "Nothing is as it should be here."

"You knew it would happen? Then why didn't you warn us?" He grips her by the wrists and shakes her.

"Knowing the past doesn't mean that



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you can change it. It's the same with the future." She suddenly finds it hard to look into his ugly, kind-natured face. He lets her go, shakes his head over Alek's body.

Arcana knows the way now and something of what lies before. They need stop for neither food nor water, for as long as they are here, the cells of their bodies are unchanging. Arcana feels herself playing a kind of game that she truly doesn't care about. She thinks of the wine-red chest and wonders what can be in it to make her feel that nothing matters, that even the sadness she feels now is too unimportant for tears.

A gray structure appears before them, tall, cylindrical, reminiscent of a castle in its color and conformity (though it is perhaps something else entirely). Arcana and Wyle arrive at a seamless gray wall with great metal gates. At first the wall looks too smooth for climbing, but Arcana's eye, trained in burglary, sees some depressions and projections on the stone, and monkeywise she swarms up the wall, leaving Wyle gaping below her.

Dropping lithely down inside, she tugs at the heavy bar on the gate, but to her strength, at least, it is immovable. "You'll have to wait for me," she shouts to Wyle, unseen.

She takes the path toward the castle, noticing the grass and flowers that border the path. Though the lawn is brilliant green, it is rigid beneath her fingers as she bends to touch it. And though the flowers are of radiant colors and have a look of freshness, they too, seem artificial. All else is the same; the willows whose foliage arches and trails fluidly to the ground, even the very insects of the place. Beneath the willows she sees two figures and she walks toward them, not sure she wants to make contact with the Lords of Time.

She pauses, seeing that the two are but statues, though beautifully and realistically made. One is a lady, dressed in a white gown that hangs in elegant folds from a body that is slightly more than voluptuous. The other statue is seated and the face is so familiar, so patient, so pleasing with its full beard and lines around the eyes that she wishes to climb up into his lap and lean her face against his. At last she does so and stays there for some moments, thinking that the body of the statue is giving back some answering warmth. She can feel its pulse, but she soon realizes that it is her own blood beat transferred to unliving stone. Feeling foolish and wiping wetness out of her eyes, she climbs down. This is not getting her where she needs to go.

As she approaches the gray castle, it buries her in its shadow; she feels the weight of that shadow as if centuries have passed as she nears the tall brass doors. She shivered, feeling herself standing at the door of a tomb—she knows that there is nothing alive here. A large wrought iron bell hangs beside the door, and she pulled the cord; the bell moves imperceptibly, but there will be no sound. The doors are tight against her, but trailing streamers of stone ivy decorate the walls and these allow her to climb up to one of the narrow windows. It will be easy to wiggle her scrawny body through and drop



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(landing on her feet) on the tessellated floor. The room was. .she cannot describe it in any way except that it is like lying back and looking up at the cold perfection of the stars until a feeling of helpless fear makes you quickly look away. She went from room to room, afraid to call out, and even more afraid of meeting whatever lived in this austere environment. No one or no thing is here, and she must wait until it decides to return.

"THERE IS A GHOST in the house."

Idrene picks a starflower from a bush where blossoms have opened in cream-white profusion all the long summer. She laughs and turns to face her husband, tucking the flower into the red richness of her hair.

"I have felt it passing through the garden just now. I think it touched me." (A generation was born and died as he spoke.)

"You were dreaming"—(Mountains weathered; rivers cut new channels through porous earth.)—as you dozed in your chair."

"No, it flew through the garden like a moth; I almost saw it."

Arcana wandered a dim passageway; the atmosphere of the place hangs heavy on her shoulders, squeezed about her rib cage. Emerging into yet another room, she sees the red haired statue that she has come to accept as a motif, a constantly recurring part of the decor. This room contorted itself wildly with mirrors set at crazy angles. Everything in the room was reflected endlessly, but when she looks for herself, her own reflection is missing. She touched her narrow face, outlined her sharp nose and felt the softness of her eyes under their lids. When she was able to verify her existence, she began to snoop about the room. An enameled jewelbox was set back on a shelf in one of the cleverly concealed closets. In it she finds a necklace of jewels that did not glitter but burned with a steady interior light. She clasps it around her neck where it glowed against the greasy fibers of her old shirt. She will explore the rest of the gigantic house at her leisure, feeling not the absense of time, but its absolute presence.

"I heard the bell ring this morning," he said, "and when I answered it"—(In a real world, war was fought and two treaties were written and broken.)—"no one was there."

"You'd have me seeing ghosts in every dark corner." Her laugh was deep and thick, resonating up from her ample chest cavity. (Great trees grew to immense size in a land where no one saw them.)

Arcana kept busy by accumulating treasures—too many, she knows, to take them all with her, but she only does it to avoid remembering too much. She had recalled a richly-appointed, though familiar, room. She had felt so cold and brittle, the very sound of the wind outside the high windows was threatening. When she had looked down at herself she had seen the fallen breasts of an old woman, the dried-leaf hands. It should have been a reassuring memory, but it isn't.

"My necklace has been stolen!" She was vibrant with rage. (A species of flightless birds dwindled in number, became extinct.)

"Now you see the handiwork of my



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ghost."

"You don't really think—"

"I think I must manage to contact this ghost. It haunts us for a purpose of its own."

"You would catch a thing of air and an overcrowded imagination?"

"If I want to."

Arcana will enter the library, an echoing place webbed thick with shadows. The rows of books along the walls reminded her of tombstones, each with its neat inscription. She made a quick intake of breath as she turned and saw the statue. It is standing in front of a row of books as if studying the titles. "I don't remember seeing you in here before, but you look like you belong in this room." She spoke to him in the usual, slightly impertinent tone; she always found herself talking to this particular statue. She had thought it funny at first, but she didn't feel like laughing now. Her body is beginning to feel an immense sluggishness. She would have dropped into a chair from the weight of her own body, but her legs have become rigid. Then her perceptions went crazy as the statue moved—the eyes blinked.

"You see, Idrene. I have our ghost."

The female statue, now animate, crossed the room to stare angrily at Arcana. "My necklace!" She tears it from Arcana's throat, breaking the clasp.

"You're from the real world," said the Time Lord with a certain awe.

"I am Arcana, Witch of the Crossways," she says, hearing the incredible slow, low tones of her own voice. "I have come to bargain with you on behalf of the Duke of Glain."

"You would bargain with"—he laughed sharply—"a Lord of Time for this, this ephemeral heap of ordure who calls himself powerful. In your world I could walk out and gather children like you as one would pick bouquets of wildflowers, and before midday all would be withered and dying in my hands." In his laughter was all the careless cruelty of time. "So, my light fingered ghost, you've managed to slide into Time's Center and into my stronghold. Let's bargain in earnest and I'll set you a quest. If you win it, you may make your Lord's request. You must enter the forest where leaves fall forever and find a certain dwelling. I think you will know it when you see it; most worldlings do. A mysterious hermit you will find there wears a ring like none you have ever seen. Bring it to me."

"As good as done," says Arcana, turning to go.

"There is one warning I must give you. Do not look directly upon his face."

Arcana felt herself growing lighter as he speaks. The lips of the statue are hardening, the eyes glazing. Arcana stretched her arms and legs, feeling as if she is awakening from a too long, too deep sleep. Yet she knows she has not been dreaming because the Time Lady held the recovered necklace around her plump white throat. Immediately Arcana feels that she wants to be away from this place. There was an alien aspect to the Time Lord's face that has not been apparent to her until now. Centuries will pass like the slow grinding of stone on stone before that carven smile, those dead eyes, would change.

She began to run, down an indigo



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corridor, mad with deepwater reflections, up to a window and through it into the light of an eternally ascendant sun. The weight and dust-smell of centuries fall away as she scales the wall, the stone abrading her hands and knees.

"WYLE!" SHE HALF-FELL from the wall and ran forward to assail him.

"I didn't know if you'd come out of there or not," Wyle says, when he is able to make sense of her jabbering. "But waiting isn't hard here. One minute is much the same as the next. I was dreaming, or maybe I wasn't even asleep. I walked through a place of shadows and a long figure without a face—"

"Forget your dreams. The Time Lord had given us a quest. If we fulfill it, he will grant the Duke's request. We'll be able to leave this awful place. Come, I'll tell you, as we walk, what the Lords of Time are like and how they live."

A duskiness in the air—and shadows had begun to envelop them. They had sensed rather than seen the trees about them, ancient and twisted trees, whose upper branches were obscured in distance and blurred by the intense blueness of the air. The utter silence of the place had intimidated them, but Arcana had reached out to take Wyle's hand. Leaves like pale silver outlines of ghosts were whispering down from above, slowmotion falling, drifting, twisting, hypnotic in their motion. Arcana had felt that she was being buried alive in the light crispness of leaves and their warm organic smells and she wished she could die with them, grow brown and withered and gone.

Only a terrible inner toughness that life on the street had given her kept her on her feet. Wyle tries to lie down, but she kicks him sharply. They wade knee deep in the curling crisp leaves, drunk on the smell of leaf-mold, half in love with the perpetual dying season of the year.

"There," says Wyle.

A dimness is all they can see, a gathering mass of solid shadow.

"You said it would be easy, but I don't like this place. I've been here before, or to someplace like it." Wyle nervously caresses the smooth staghorn handle of his dagger.

"It's only a house—looks kind of deserted, though. I didn't think you'd be afraid of haunts or spirits." She walks forward boldly, too young to feel what Wyle feels about the place. The stones hang together precariously, furred with green-black moss. Wings rustle in the branches above, but Arcana sees no birds. The door stands open.

At first Wyle will not enter; his knuckles are white as he grips his weapon. Arcana has to laugh at him, careless, cruel child's laughter that rings (somehow) familiar in her ears. And he follows into the cave-damp interior of the deserted house. The room is barren; a rough bed tied with thongs and heaped with dried evergreen boughs, a hugh, gnarled tree-stump hollowed out into a chair, polished dark and smooth by the body of someone who had often sat there, staring into a fire on the raw-brick hearth, seeing Xesis knew what visions. Arcana tries to shake off the feeling of uneasiness



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that is creeping up the back of her neck.

Footsteps crackle in the leaves outside, paralyzing Wyle with fear. Arcana guides him to a corner where a heavy crossbeam casts down a bar of darkness. Someone enters, ducking to avoid hitting his head on the door. As he passes Arcana averts her eyes, remembering the Time Lord's warning, but she cannot help looking once he was gone by. He is gangling, raw-boned but does not move in a clumsy way. His ragged shirt exposes long wristbones, strangely delicate to end in large, ungainly hands which are darkly stained. His coarse black hair curls down over his collar. Arcana finds herself wishing that he will turn around.

He picks up a log and drops it into the fireplace. The dry wood seems to blaze up almost as he touches it. He sits down on the chair and extends his hands, letting the firelight turn them redly translucent. He seems a lonely figure, trying to bring warmth to this lost place. Arcana impulsively wishes to stand beside him, dispelling the long loneliness with a word and spend the eternal evening in talk or companionable silence. As the figure relaxes, seems to fall into a light sleep, his hand drops, almost to the floor, firelight sparking off the frost-silver of a large ring.

Arcana is immediately all hard business as her eyes catch that spark. "I'll sneak up close and if he's asleep, I'll slip the ring from his finger."

Wyle gripped her convulsively. "No, you mustn't touch him. The Time Lord played us false. I think I know this man. Only he isn't properly a man."

"Quiet, he'll waken." Wyle's eyes slip nervously sideways, to see if what she says is happening.

"And even *he* sleeps," he says, letting his hands slip weakly from Arcana's shoulders.

Her taunt muscles carry her across the room, her bare feet making only the softest of sounds. But the sleeper breathes deeply, regularly, even when her fingers delicately grip the ring. It is ice, sending a shudder through her. Where the set should be is a dark opening like a tiny well that is so deep she has to keep herself from looking into it for too long. She thinks there are certain things stirring at the bottom of the well. It isn't difficult for her to slide the ring off the lax finger. She clasps the treasure against her palm, motioning Wyle toward the door. His foot makes a scraping sound and the creature before the fire is thrusting himself upward. Though Arcana does not look back, in her peripheral sight he seems to tower upward, growing to an impossible height. She lets her fear propel her to necessary speed as she bolts through the door. Looking back over her shoulder, she sees Wyle, running slowly like a figure trapped in a dream, and unbelievably, turning his head, turning to look back at the face of what pursues him; it is just as she remembers it.

Wyle's legs let his body fall of its own weight and he settled to the ground, all knowledge all pain all fear all joy sliding from his features glazing over into a terrible peace. And so final. So she could see nothing but the blurred prisms of her own tears and something was tearing its way out of her, but she could still run, so, of course she did.



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And, of course, she got away, with the ring a burning cold circle in her hand and with a gnawing curiosity that made her wish that she, too, had looked back. It would have been one way of solving the mystery.

The Time Lord's statue stands in the indigo passageway, looking out a window as if it were waiting for her return. She will fling the silver ring at his feet. "The quest is done, you stupid, smug, stone bastard."

Seablue light danced across her eyes and she felt herself grow ponderous again. The statue moved, stooped, picks up the ring, seemingly unoffended, yet perhaps her ghost-words had never reached his ears. He appears strangely pleased and reaches out to draw her nearer, but she shrugged off his touch. "I want nothing of you for myself, but my *master* wishes eternal youth and happiness, little may it profit the ill-smelling old crocodile."

The Time Lord looks at her in surprise (as though a flower from his lovely bouquet had calmly spit in his eye).

A SERVANT POURED WINE from the cobwebbed bottle into the crystal goblet and put it carefully into the frail, brownspotted hand. "It's cold in here," whined the old lady. The stags and hounds and maidens and unicorns moved with constant life along the walls. "The wind is rising again; I can hear it."

"Yes, Ma'm, but it's only the wind after all," answered the servant, a surreptitious smile appearing on his youthful face.

"Yes." Her querelous voice subsided and she looked around the room. It had changed very little. The small jewel-polished chairs and tables stand superciliously in their places, mirrored in the shining floor.

Another servant appeared at the door: "My Lady, the little gentlemen is ready for bed." A child rushed into the room, a bloom of red curls, a bird-egg speckling of freckles. "Good night, my angel," said the old lady. A line of spittle drooled down the boy's chin from his open mouth; his eyes shone with a heavenly, a mindless happiness. He made squealing sounds and grabbed at invisible butterflies as the maidservant led him from the room. "Good night, my little duke. Such a good boy, such a *happy* boy." She nearly strangled on her own high, witch-laughter.

The night wind prowled endlessly, sending unseen filaments to pluck at the tapestries and make the fire flutter on the hearth. The old lady's head nodded forward, like a heavy pod on a slender stem. Dry leaves zig-zagged leisurely to the ground.

"I've lost my way," shouted Arcana, her voice deadened in this quiet place.

"Follow me," said a voice and Alek appeared beside her. She followed him among dark trees, but his strides were long and she had to run to keep up.

"You're going in circles," she accused him at last, grabbing hold of his sleeve. He started laughing and grasping firmly the skin of his forehead, he began to peel it off easily, exposing the face of Wyle. It was peaceful, as she had last remembered it. Without speaking he gently led her along a path bordered with stone willows and starflower shrubs. She

(cont. on page 42)



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# DEM BONES

*John Diomede says of this, his first story for us, "I hope that the fact that this fantasy is set in heaven will not discourage you; the setting is integral to the point I wish to make." As will become obvious . . .*

## JOHN K. DIOMEDE

### Illustrated by BILLY GRAHAM

It was Karate Oscar that laughed at me. I mean, all the others would smile or something, but Oscar laughed so loud I got mad. But I didn't say nothing, cause Oscar's big. We was sitting out on January's porch, just me and January and Hot Jimmy and Anthony. We was just talking when Oscar pulled up. His car's not so special, but he sure thinks it is. He paid I don't know how much fixing it up with foxy stuff like the super pimps over by the city got. Karate Oscar don't drive no big sharp Eldorado, though. He just got a long Lincoln. It's old and all beat up kind of. Oscar, he ain't a *super* pimp, but he's big. He's as big as any of us from the Shines is gonna get.

I was watching the sun go down. Across the street from January's house there's this place where they knocked down a building, I guess. It's stuck between two apartment houses and runs clear through to Prospect Street. You can see the sun going down sometimes, dunking right down through the buildings. You can't see it set all the way, cause of the houses on Prospect Street. I was watching the sun; it was getting bigger and bright orange and I said something about how nice it was. Anthony was gonna say something but didn't, cause then we heard Oscar. He was standing at the foot of the stoop with that ugly black head of his split wide open laughing. He was leaning against his pimp wagon, but he walked over to us, walking his cool walk, sort of bobbing so we know he's cool.

"Hey, man," he says to me, "you got soul." He laughed. "You be real sweet now, all that pretty sun stuff." I don't say nothing. Karate Oscar just laughed some more. Then he started in on Anthony. See, Anthony's a red nigger and Oscar is always saying something bad on Anthony's ma. I don't know. Oscar always thinks that's something. So Anthony gets up to go. He used to be what you call a murphy artist, one of the best, but nobody he knows is in Karate Oscar's class. He better leave or he'll get mad. And Oscar's *big*.

So Anthony went in. That means it's



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just me and January and Hot Jimmy. And Oscar. None of us wanted to say nothing. We all sitting there quiet, and so Karate Oscar figures to show off some.

"Look here," he says, pulling out this little black box from his jacket.

"What's that?" says January. Ol' January's afraid of Oscar. I ain't so scared. I mean, *I* know Oscar wouldn't do nothing for no reason. It's January that don't know it.

"Look," says Oscar. He opened the box and there's a big old ring in there. He looked up at us and grinned. "How's that? Ain't that something?"

"That a diamond?" I ask.

"Hey, man," says Oscar, "you blind or what? Sure, it's a diamond. What you think it is?"

"What you doing with a diamond?" says Jimmy.

Oscar put the ring back in his coat. "Gonna give it to my main woman." He took off his big white hat with the green band on it and settled it down cool. He waited for somebody to say something.

"Who's that? Claudia?" says Jimmy.

I knew Claudia done gone off with this dude named Wilson. Oscar don't say nothing for a while, looking at his shoes. They're shiny black with green sidewalls. "Her name's Teri," he say.

"What, that chicken-face who'?" says January. Karate Oscar stare up at him mean. That's enough for ol' January. He get up and go inside. I figured I will, too. But I say goodbye to Karate Oscar.

Upstairs in January's house we forgot about Oscar fast. January got his basketball and tossed it to me.

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There's this basketball hoop in the lot across from January's house. No net, though. I ain't never played basketball with a net. His basketball's an old one, one of the red, white, and blue kind, so you know how old it is. All the colors are just about worn off.

"Hey, come on," he say. "I be *Kareem*."

"Not with this thing you ain't," I say. "You gotta be an ABA. You be Artis Gilmore."

"Yeah," he says. He don't really know nothing about the game.

"Okay, then I be Wilt the Stilt," I say.

January grinned. "You only good at stuffin', then," he says.

I followed him out of his apartment, down the crazy stairs. "You bring that chicken-face who' around, I'll show you stuffin'," I say. January laughed. He's about my best friend.

We played basketball for like an hour. The lot where the hoop is got two lights, up on the sides of the buildings. We don't have to worry about it getting dark. Sometimes we play there all night, when we don't have nothing else to do. We played mostly taps, but January ain't never got the hang of jumping up, getting the rebound, and shooting before his feet touch the ground. He looked pretty bad and I beat him a couple of games. Then Karate Oscar came looking around. That ain't good. He takes the ball away and shoots a whole lot, and he's worse than January or anybody. But you don't have to play basketball to do what he does. And, cause of what he does, we don't say nothing. We just let him shoot.

"You dudes gonna play basketball forever?" he say. His shot missed the hoop and the backboard and everything. January ran after it. Oscar waved to him that he wanted another throw.

"What's wrong with that?" I say.

He say, "You ain't gonna get threads like these." He was wearing his big pimp suit. He had a jacket that flapped when he moved. It was light green and the pockets and the big lapels were dark green. His pants were green, too. And he still had the white hat and the shoes. I know January'd dig having a suit like that. Me too.

"Ain't there any way to get a suit like that without being a pimp?" says January. Karate Oscar gave him another bad look. I don't know why, unless Oscar don't like being called a pimp.

"Yeah," says Oscar, "go be one of them city dudes." Then he laughed, cause we all know why we can't. Oscar took another throw at the basket. The ball hit the rim and bounced up and away. I watched it, and doggone if January just stood where he was. The ball rolled away.

"Hey, get that ball," Oscar say. "What you staring at, man?"

January looked like he woke up. "Say what?" he say. I know what. He was looking where the sky was all lit up, where the city was like a fire behind the buildings.

"Never mind," says Oscar, "I got to check out my women." I was hoping he'd say we could come, but he didn't.

Instead, we walked down the block to Oakwood Street. There was a joint on the corner called *Bar's Mike & Grill.*



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We stopped in there a lot. The place was pretty cool; you didn't have to worry about some bad dude poking his roscoe in your back every five minutes. January had the basketball on the floor; he kept one foot on it so's nobody'd run off with it. *Bar's* ain't *that* cool. When we were kids we used to play basketball and then go over to the Dairy Queen. Now we all growed up, so we sit on the stools and drink beer.

It was still early, I guess, cause the place was empty. Weren't nobody in the booths, nobody even behind the bar yet. So January went behind and fixed us up a couple of drafts. I wanted to go put on the record machine, but suddenly I was too tired to move. All quiet and empty, the joint was really kind of scary. January didn't say nothing for a long time, until he finished his first beer, and all I did was think.

"What we gonna do?" I say at last.

January just looked at me for a while. "Now? You mean tonight? I don't know. Tomorrow's Sunday, we got to get up early. I don't want to do nothing too heavy tonight."

"Naw," I says, "I don't mean now. I mean, like, what Oscar was saying. We gonna play basketball forever?"

"Sure," say January, "unless you gonna get us into the city. There go a dude this morning, he say that's all the niggers from the Shines is good for, playing basketball."

I finished my beer and got up to get another. "They got niggers in the city, too, you know."

"Yeah," says January with that snort, like he's sick or something. "But they's awful *clean* niggers. They's *white* niggers. Out here in the Shines, we's the *bad* cats."

"I don't always say that January be the smartest dude around. "You and me ain't as bad as Karate Oscar," I say, "but we all got to live here. Ain't no way to get out."

"It could be worse," says January, and I saw we was getting into the old hassle all over. "You see rats?" he says.

I shook my head. Once, twice I seen a rat, I think. Long time ago, I saw a little pointy head on the stairs in my apartment building. But it was so long ago I might have been dreaming.

"There used to be rats," says January. Sure, I know that. They don't have any rats in the city. They don't have bugs. *We* got bugs. I don't think I could live in a room without cockroaches; I wouldn't trust it. "Somebody got to have rats. You go out Oakwood, past the projects. Them bad cats out there, I bet *they* got rats."

"You ever go out there?"

"Naw," he say. "But I heard."

In a little while I saw Karate Oscar come in with this old drunk. I don't get up, I let Oscar get his own beer. There ain't never no real booze in the bar, so the drunk got to be happy with beer, too. I hear they got real stuff over in the city, but I don't know for sure. Oscar sat down next to me. He real mad.

"You dudes just keep playing basketball," he say. "There just ain't no percentage gaming women."

"What's wrong?" I say. Maybe something heavy happened; give us all something to talk about.

"Some nigger throw stuff in my woman's face."

"What?" says January. He still don't know how bad some cats are. "Who,



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Teri?"

"Naw," says Oscar, "this broad Arlayne. She give me her trap money so I figure she's cool. She used to be Danny Valiant's old lady. He had some dude mess her tonight."

"She okay?" I ask.

"In the hospital. I don't want nothing to do with her. She's yours. Go be a super pimp," he says with an ugly look. I don't say nothing.

"You got to be careful now," say January.

"I don't know. Maybe Danny Valiant don't dig me so much right now, either. But we too close to the city for something dynamite."

"I thought we too close for throwing stuff in a poor who's eyes, too," says January. Karate Oscar look mean.

"What you gonna do now?" I says.

Karate Oscar finished his beer. He held the glass funny, his pinkie stuck out like some classy city dude. He had a big old green ring on the finger. "I gonna go to the city," he say, and January looked at me. "I gonna get into that city, and I gonna show 'em all something. You guys can sit here in the Shines. You wait. I'm gonna be the biggest thing they ever seen."

"You really gonna go?" say January. He don't believe it for a minute, and I don't, too.

Karate Oscar handed me his empty glass. I fill it for him. "Yeah, man," he say, "you listen to me? I say I'm gonna go there."

"Can I have your pimp suit?" say January. Oscar yelled something and chased January out of *Bar's*. I took the basketball and went home, cause we had church in the morning.

I guess that was about the only thing that's good about living in the Shines, that we only had church once a week. Every Sunday morning I'd get up about eight o'clock and take a quick shower. I kept my Sunday clothes special. Everybody did. The church was in an old store front on Oakwood Street, about four blocks downtown from *Bar's*. Everybody went to church. Most of the older people really liked it, I guess, but me and January just thought it was kind of a drag. Lots of times Anthony'd say that's why we's stuck in the Shines—on account we don't dig going to church, but I always say why is *he* stuck here, too. He don't have the answer to that one but I do.

Now over toward the city they go to church a whole lot more. I hear they have big old churches, fiery white churches that stick up into the sky, and they all crowd in on Sundays and sing so loud you can't hear yourself think. Once me and Hot Jimmy went in as far as the edge of the Shines, just to hear 'em. Hot Jimmy grinned at me, cause he couldn't figure why they was all singing so loud. He say it was a chump thing to do, it sure weren't gonna get them nothing. We tried it once or twice, singing loud, all afternoon, but nothing great ever happened here. And over in the city they don't really need too much, do they? They got about everything I ever wanted.

But that's part of living in the city. And it's not just a Sunday thing, neither. Here, why, we all get down to the church come the Sabbath morning. We don't know what would happen to anything that missed church, cause nobody ever has. And that don't seem so



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strange. Just nobody ever misses church. The store front ain't so big, and it gets hot and all, and there ain't never no flowers or nothing except come Easter and stuff, but I know I ain't never even thought about skipping. I go down with the rest of the niggers and we all sing the hymns and go home to chicken dinner. In the city, see, they're still singing. Those hymns are floating up to the very Throne of God, man, the sun's going down and they're still singing away. And on Monday, too. They go to church every day in the city. Every morning they got to get up and head to one of the big stone churches. They got organs and choirs and bells in towers and everything, but that's all they got. Every day, just singing hymns. I don't know as I could stand it.

Now further out Oakwood Street, past the projects, where them badasses hang out, I don't think they bother much about church. Yeah, I heard what they call churches out there, but mostly they're empty. Anthony say that's why they living out there and we're living in the Shines.

So the next morning after we saw Oscar in the bar I get ready for church on time. I always want to get there early. Not cause I like it so much but so's I can have a choice of seats. Then I can get one right at the back, and be the first out afterwards. If I wait and come in late, there's the chance I got to stand, and that always looks bad. So I'm sitting right there in the back row when Karate Oscar comes in. He ain't wearing his pimp suit now. He got on just a plain blue suit, no big white hat, neither. He always looks so sad on Sunday. He sit down toward the front. January come in looking like Oscar rough him up some last night. He sits down next to me but I don't say nothing. We wait and everybody else shows up. Nothing special about the service. Mostly we just sing, there ain't no sermons or nothing. Just hymns, and I'm itching to get out.

I was just thinking about what I was gonna do after church. I don't know now. Maybe I was gonna go down and hang around with Oscar. I watched him during the meeting, and when it was done he didn't say nothing, didn't stand around and talk or nothing, but went right out to his old Lincoln. January didn't look like he was in a big hurry to tag along, but I wanted to see Karate Oscar real bad. I know he didn't like me hanging around a whole lot, but he was the big cat in the Shines.

"Hey, Oscar," I say. He was fetching his white hat out the back of the car and fixing it on his head all cool. "Hey, you gonna get your who's out now?"

He looked at me kind of slow, like I was wasting his whole afternoon. "Yeah, man, what you think?"

"Well, hey, you figure you need some help?" That was a *bad* thing to say.

Karate Oscar just slam the car door. "No," he says, "I do all right."

"Well, then could I just, like, ride with you?"

"What you want to do that for, man? Got an eye for one of my who's?"

Then I got scared, cause I ain't never told nobody. "Naw," I say, looking down at the ground, "just I figure to be a big pimp like you." I had this dream where Karate Oscar stares at me for a minute, and then he grins and hits me on the back. "Yeah, kid," I figure he



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say, "You all right!" Then we slap skin and I be the heavy new pimp in the Shines.

No way. He looked at me again and shook his head. "You stupid, man," he says. But I talk him into just letting me wheel with him.

First we stopped in *Bar's* for some beer. Karate Oscar carried out three more, one for him and one for me and one for his chicken-face who'. Oscar had a lot of flash but he weren't no badass. He wouldn't have been jazzin' the Shines if he was. Then we drove down Oakwood Street a ways, toward the city. There's this long stretch of houses and rib joints, and then it meets Hanson Avenue. Right there is a couple of bars and a record shop. The bars are bigger than ours, and there's always a string of who's standing outside. They call it Who' Row. Some of the pimps were standing in a huddle on the corner across the street, all wearing pimp suits and big sharp hats, different colors. When Karate Oscar pull up, everybody wave and holler to him. Oscar grin and walk real cool into one of the bars. He didn't wave back or say nothing, just smile and look around to see who's there.

I followed him into the bar. Teri, his chicken-face who', was sitting at the bar on a stool. Oscar went up to her and cleared some dude off the stool next to hers. I sort of stood around behind him.

"Get your bread together," he say to her. She just looked at him, kind of drunk.

"Ain't got *no* money, baby," she says.

Oscar looked like he was getting mad. When it's money, he get mad fast. "What you spend it on, honey?" he say. He ignored the cat that jumped behind the bar to get Oscar a beer.

"Nothing, Oscar. You know I don't hold out on you."

"How many tricks you turn today?" he says, real quiet.

"Ain't broke luck yet, Oscar baby," she says, looking down at her lap.

Now Oscar *real* mad. He stood up and yelled at her. Everybody else in the place act nervous. "Come on, you black bitch," he say, "I gonna knock that stupid who' ass of yours up around your shoulders. You been out long enough to get high on the beer, you ain't turned your first trick yet. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Oscar," she say, scared.

"You feel all right?"

"Yeah," she say.

Oscar grabbed her arm, trying to pry off that diamond ring he gave her. "I gonna kick you out, bitch, and when I kick you out, ain't *no* pimp gonna take you in." Teri was screaming and crying, but nobody in the bar wanted to cross Karate Oscar. He done squeeze that ring off her hand and then he hit her face. She fell down but Oscar didn't care. He just walked out of the place looking fine, whistling, and I went after him.

"Hey, man," I says, "what she gonna do now?"

"I don't know," says Oscar. "She ain't gonna work the Shines no more, that for sure. And she for real ain't moving to the city. What's that leave?"

It left the badass neighborhood, out Oakwood Street. There was a lot more wrong with the place than just the



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people. The sun don't work so good for some reason. At least Oscar's women don't freeze; out Oakwood they got to wear big old coats at night, and stand all huddled up in the doorways to keep warm. And it's dark out there, even in the daytime. Maybe cause they're so far from the city and all, I don't know. Anyway, forcing a who' to go work out there was a pretty heavy thing. But when he's mad, Karate Oscar's a pretty heavy dude.

The way it is for us now, in the Shines, I mean, is you pretty much get to be what you want. Karate Oscar always wanted to be the big pimp. Well, he is. But that's all that he is, and he ain't never gonna be nothing else. Me, I thought a lot about being a dynamite basketball player. I mean, that's what me and January always talked about. Even though he's a crummy basketball player now, if January wanted to be a star he would be, and never nothing else. So you got to choose real careful. But damn, everybody gets tired of it sooner or later. There ain't so much room to strut around in the Shines.

Just then I was thinking about being a big pimp like Oscar. I hadn't got to the real decision yet, but I was pretty near. Until I did cop I was gonna stay a kid, but that wasn't so bad. I had a couple of the faster girls eyeing me already, sure to turn out, and I knew it was gonna be all right. Most of them can't think of nothing they'd rather be than a flat-backing who'. But they got to have a good pimp. That's what they show off. They stand around and brag about how much bread they give him, and the clothes he buy, and all like that. So if there's gonna be a new boss cat around, they want to know about it first.

All this kind of noise looked like fun, but I could see as Karate Oscar didn't seem so wildass happy no more. After we left his chicken-face who' I says to him, "Hey, man, what's wrong?"

He just spit and says, "Nothing wrong, man, just tired."

"You got everything you need, man," I say. "Ain't no cat in the Shines that wouldn't trade places with you."

"In the Shines," he says. I don't know what he meant. "Things ain't so hellified different than what they used to be," he says. All the time he's talking he's making down the sidewalk, running his game for all the pimps and broads on the Row. He do it natural, right on time, don't even have to think. He was something to see. "Maybe they didn't give it to us straight. Maybe we fell for the line too easy. This ain't no paradise, man."

I say to Oscar that I don't dig it. "What you want, man?" I say. "You wasn't no lace shirt pimp in the old place, was you?"

"Nah," he says, spitting again.

"And don't you live better now? Dig it, you got no hassles. The Man don't cruise around the corner, and your who's don't have to take off down the block every five minutes, right? You a big man. You be just what you want."

Oscar just stopped, right in the middle of the sidewalk. He looked at me but not *at* me, sort of thinking. "In the old place we didn't live no worse a slum than this. Maybe there ain't no cops around to bust our asses, but that's only cause there ain't nowhere to go. Only I'm goin'."



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When he say that, I figure for sure I be a pimp. If Oscar was really fixed on moving out somewhere, I had a better chance for making the big time. See, Oscar was the last dude to say, "I be the *big* pimp." He be the big pimp, too, until the next cat say, "*I* be the big pimp." And that leaves Oscar just one of the washed-up regulars. The new cat then be the big guy until somebody like me hits on it later.

"Hey, boy, I want you to do this little thing for me," he says. "I ain't gonna be one of those chump pimps, one shot at the long green till some candyass dude knock 'em off the fast track. You get my broads together. I don't care what's goin' down, get them in the car. We goin'."

"Where you goin', Oscar?" I says. He don't say nothing, so I went off to grab up his who's.

When I got back with them, Karate Oscar still don't say nothing. He just opened the doors of his big pimp car and loaded his women in. He looks at me, but they ain't no room left, so I just ask him when he be back. I can't figure why he'd take his women out Oakwood Street so they all could freeze in the doorway. Nobody say nothing, though, and Oscar, he just slam his door and take off. But he don't head out Oakwood. No, he go the other way, toward the city. Then I started to worry. The city was sitting out there, I could see the big glow, I could hear them voices singing, I could see the heavy lightnings flashing, the choirs laying on the hymns. I don't figure that's the place for Karate Oscar and his who's, but I *know* Oscar want to find out why.

Karate Oscar ain't never come back. Maybe for a while we all fool ourselves, thinking maybe Oscar be the first nigger get into the city. But sometimes some dude come back from the badass ground out Oakwood Street, and he say Oscar be out even farther. We don't want to think about nothing worse off than that badass town. I don't know if I believe it. I hope not, for poor Oscar. We still don't know for sure where he be.

Karate Oscar done a dumb thing, maybe, but we sure ain't gonna get nowhere this way. Maybe he was right a little. Maybe we always fell for the line too easy.

—JOHN K. DIOMEDE

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Witch in Time (cont. from page 32)

picked a flower and felt it cool and rigid against her cheek. Wyle smiled and seated himself in one of the garden chairs. She knew what was coming but still she felt her stomach contract when he removed the mebraneous mask and became the Time Lord. "*You* are Arcana?" he asked. "You are much changed. I only dozed off for a moment. . ."

"Years have passed and with them, my life, a life crowded with things happening, people coming and going. But you have not changed at all." She placed the starflower in his open hand.

He rose, holding the flower before him, where it began to flame and sizzle and throw sparks, illuminating a great darkness ahead. She walked close beside his lanky, scarecrow figure, content, for in a moment he would peel back the final mask and she would see his face.

—JANET FOX



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# THE NIGHTS OF DREADFUL SILENCE

## GLEN COOK

### Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA

AN OMINOUS THING was happening at Itaskia's Royal Palace. Aristithorn of Necremnos, the infamous sorcerer, was being cheated by King Norton.

The wizard repeated, "Your Highness, your servant is certain he heard the promise of the Princess Yselda's hand to the man who would slay that up-country ogre."

Norton asked, "Vizier, did we make that ridiculous promise?"

"No, Majesty."

"You see, wizard?" The King glared. Of course he had made the proclamation—he made it every time a dragon, troll, or other disaster arose—but he had no intention of following through. Never had.

Aristithorn sighed. "Ah, so that's the way of it. Hast heard of Ainjar, King of Alfar, Majesty? He cheated Silmagester the Dark—sad, his reward. Three plagues: first, dragons; then locusts in swarms; later, thirty-three daughters so ugly they are unmarriable, and each of whom eats with the appetite of ten lusty men. . . ."

"You threaten?" the King roared.

"Nay, Illustrious. I merely make a moral: dishonesty seldom pays."

"Seize him!" Norton bellowed. Softer, "Good an excuse as I'll find, I guess."

Aristithorn shook his head sadly as pikemen closed in. "Hate to do it, but:

"Past six nights and come seventh sun.
Itaskia's lying shall be done;
This treacher Norton's wicked realm
Black vengeance mine shall overwhelm;
Then ever after shall be heard
No slightest sound of singing bird,
No low of cow, nor spoken word."

There was more, equally bad poetry, which does not bear repeating. He finished with a muttered, "Not bad for spur-of-the-moment." He threw his staff to the marble floor, watched it become a huge serpent, mounted it and rode from the palace, past horrified guards.

THAT WAS THE SAME DAY Bragi Ragnarson suffered a fit of nostalgia and, to the hoots and jeers of his friends, galloped off north toward Trolledyngja, a place someone once



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described as "the arse of the world on ice." Bragi only remembered the good things, though, until, two days north of Itaskia, a sudden rain squall came rumbling along and pounced. He had equally sudden visions of himself forced to face the weather as it would be a few hundred miles farther along—snow and sleet and ice and all that. Quickly, he turned back for the warm taproom at Itaskia's Red Hart Inn, all pride fled.

Shortly, he fell asleep. And shortly, his scatter-brained mare had them hopelessly lost. Bragi woke to find himself being carried through unfamiliar forest typical of the kingdom anywhere north of the Silverbind.

Three days later he was still searching for the road home, completely miserable. The cold drizzle would not stop. Then he heard someone singing. Also hearing his indignant stomach rumbling, Bragi thought he might cadge something to eat. He studied the camp of the singer from hiding, saw a bedraggled old donkey and a ragged old man huddling around a small fire where a cauldron exuded aromatics. The clearing around the old man was dry, but, being so hungry, Bragi did not notice. He stepped out of the underbrush.

"Hello, grandfather," he said, "could you spare a starving man a smallish bite?" He waved a hand in the direction of the pot.

The old man, bent over something he was trying to sew, started. He looked at Bragi uncertainly. "You're a long way from Trolledyngja," he observed. "You're welcome, sure, if you've brought your own tools. I've no extra gear, not being accustomed to guests."

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"Thanks. Say, how'd you know where I'm from?" While talking, he dug battered utensils from his saddlebag.

The old man rummaged through his own gear, found a spoon and bowl, joined the northman over the pot. "Where else do men grow big as bears, and twice as ugly?" he asked. "Who else butchers the King's Tongue such a way? You're one of those wandering heroes, eh? Dragon-slaying and maiden-rescuing. Ah, what a life. Wish I were young again . . . . What would you be doing out here?"

"Times are tough," Bragi grumbled. "Too much competition. In the old days, before Norton, it was 'a dragon in every cave and a troll under every mountain.' But since Norton killed King Willem, things have gotten worse. Trolls and dragons're almost gone . . . Willem was a conservationist." Then he remembered the question. "I fell asleep in the saddle coming down the North Road. Stupid horse decided to go exploring. Been lost three days." He finished filling his bowl and said around a mouthful, "Good! Well seasoned. What of you?"

"Cooking is my hobby," the old man replied, also with a full mouth. "I'm out here trying to think up a spell to fit a curse I cast on Itaskia."

"Sorcerer, huh?"

"Uhn. Aristithorn of Necremnos . . . you don't seem distressed." He sounded hurt.

"Should I be?" He tossed his head to get the ends of his blond hair out of his stew. "Judging by Zindahjira, a man's safe if he isn't jumped straight off. I don't have anything a wizard would want anyway. Can I have another bowl?"

"Help yourself. You've met the Silent One, eh? Biggest windbag in the trade."

"That's him. Say, what kind of curse are you brewing up?"

The old man snorted. "You been in the kingdom lately?"

"Left the city five days back."

"Ever hear of the King's proclamation about the ogre? The one that's been stealing maidens and the like, not the one who robs travelers. *He* has a license, and pays his taxes."

"Heard somebody finally got him. Why? You the fellow?"

"Got him *and* two of his brothers who were helping handle a surfeit of maidens."

"And Norton wouldn't pay, eh?"

"No!"

"Should've expected it. How'd you get old, being so naïve? He promises his daughter every time there's trouble. What happened to the maidens?"

"Well, after stoning me for ruining what they said was a good thing, I suppose they went home and made do with ordinary men. There'll be a passle of ugly, warty, hairy little bastards born come spring. I hope they all grow up trollish and go into the independent ogre business. Serve Norton right."

"What're you going to do about it?"

"Don't know. When he refused me Yselda, I cast the first curse I thought of. Said that, starting the seventh day after I left, Itaskia would be stricken by total silence until Norton pays."

"Hey, that's good!" Bragi chuckled, speaking more clearly as his belly filled and his mouthfuls grew smaller. "I've



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got some friends there who need just that. How're you going to do it?"

"That's my problem. I don't know. Never tried anything like it. Wish I'd thought before I opened my mouth. Norton's probably still laughing."

"Be good if you could do it. Might get Yselda after all. Some woman, from all I've heard. A little skinny, but . . . ."

"What? How?"

Bragi considered a moment, said, "Put yourself in Norton's place, King in a city with no sound. Like everyone's deaf, eh? Everything would have to be in writing, eh? How many written promises can a man break before he gets hung from his own rafters? A liar like Norton would sell his mother to keep on cheating. Mark me, Norton'll have his daughter up for whoever gets rid of the silence. Bet?"

The wizard grunted thoughtfully. Bragi imagined fiery lines from dreadful tomes where spells were written in blood on parchments of virgins' skins, bound in dragon hide, raging before his eyes.

"What do you want with Yselda, anyway? I thought sorcerers had to do without, or lose their powers."

"I'm old, ready to retire. I want to raise roses and practice the magicks of love."

"At your age? She'll kill you inside a week."

"No, no. I'm a wizard, remember? All my abstentions of three hundred years are stored up inside me, ready to go. I can hold my own even against Yselda."

"I suppose it's possible," Bragi muttered. "What's she got to say about it?"

"She didn't like me until I mentioned my wizard's savings. Ha! Then she pressed my case more passionately than I. That fool Norton is blind. The Palace Guards stand in line at her door, and the idiot thinks I want her as a source of virgin's blood."

Laughter, uproarious. Every man within a hundred miles of Itaskia, except the King, knew at least a dozen ribald stories about the Princess's boudoir adventures. She was a girl of a fiery nature, and always kept a fireman handy.

"Oh! What magicks would come of using her blood!" Bragi roared. "She'd wreck your whole profession. So! What about the spell?"

The sorerer grunted noncommittally. He and Bragi started as an idea occured to both. As one, they said, "I'll make you a deal . . . ."

An hour found diabolical plots plotted and wicked agreements agreed.

The next two days were dull. Bragi was accustomed to bloody action or drunken inaction. Neither was available here. He amused himself by devouring vast quantities of Aristithorn's excellent stews.

The day the curse was to be fulfilled, Bragi made a point of staying out of the way. Aristithorn was uncertain he could cast the necessary spells, was terrified of his all-too-probable failure. However, he would hazard it. Bragi fled camp, following a desire to be at a safe distance when the wizard started summoning demons.

He sat on the earth in the forest, leaning against a tree, watching the squirrels at play among the autumn leaves. His pleasures were simple. But



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even that little amusement was soon denied him. Wails and demonic howls from Aristithorn's conjurations frightened the animals. Then the outcry died and the forest became unnaturally silent. The northman grew worried. He was working up the courage to investigate when, "Ho! Bragi! Come on in! I've done it!"

He found the ancient dancing around his pentacles. "Tomorrow I go," he said. "You'd better write the messages. But how'll I understand the answers? I can't read."

"What's to understand?" the wizard asked. "Just give him the list of demands, then sit tight until you get the woman and gold. What could be easier?"

"Norton taking my head."

"There is that chance, true."

"Can I hear the one to Yselda? You were up awful late with it."

The wizard stirred through a mound of thaumaturgical gear and came up with a smallish scroll. "To the Princess Yselda, Duchess of Scarmane, et cetera, greeting from the great thaumaturge Aristithorn, Archimage of Necremnos, Lord of Eldritch Sprites . . . ."

"Why do all you magicians brag so?"

"Huh? We have to! Nobody else will. Necromancy's a hard way to make a living. Everyone cheats us. Knights try to kill us. Devils are after our souls. Everyone, everywhere, insists we're evil. Hell of a life! Praise for our modest efforts has to come from somewhere, so we do the applauding ourselves . . . ."

"Maybe. Write. Save the speeches for Yselda. I'm leaving at first light. That'll give me a little time to scout before I stick my head in the dragon's lair."

"Uhm!" the wizard grunted, already writing, tongue protruding from the corner of his mouth. "Have you memorized the way back to the road?"

"Yes."

Bragi left at sunrise, was more than halfway to the city by nightfall. He rose with the sun again and by late afternoon had camped atop a hill two miles from the city walls. From there, he watched amazedly as refugees dismally came out Itaskia's gates and marched toward the boundaries of silence. He saw many a stout wife dragging her man toward where she could catch up on her backlog of nagging. Compulsive talkers shouted with glee when they were free of the curse and could once more bore their neighbors with tales of themselves. Bragi found he was tempted to leave, to let the silence go on, but thoughts of his share of the profits strenghtened his determination.

He slept late next morning, did not ride until mid-morning. The flow of refugees had not slackened. Fighting their flow, he took until noon to reach the gates where he gave the guard officer the first of several scrolls.

Bragi was surprised by the gloominess of the city, then realized how many little noises he had always taken for granted. The song of wind was gone. The humming of insects. The creaks and groans of wagon wheels. The sounds of hooves on pavement. The silence was unnerving. He was beginning to understand the mood of the fleeing thousands.

The northman's scroll cheered the



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sour guard captain. The soldier quickly delivered him to the palace and King's herald. The herald got a second letter, danced with joy. He directed Bragi's attention to a poster. The northman was certain it was another of Norton's proclamations. He nodded.

The Vizier himself soon appeared, ushered Bragi into the Royal Presence. Here he delivered a scroll to the King. While Norton anxiously poured over the text, Bragi slipped a letter to Yselda. She read and laughed. Then, knowing there was nothing to do but wait, he sat on the floor, leaned against a pillar, and went to sleep.

Mountains of parchments and buckets of ink were used during an argument between Norton and his advisers, the latter pleading for accession to Aristithorn's demands. Bragi went unnoticed only because his prodigious snoring was inaudible. Later, however, someone did notice him and decide he might be pressured into betraying the wizard. Bragi was given parchments dripping doom and golden promises. He grinned at them all. Considering the direness of some of the threats, Norton soon concluded he could not read.

Bragi—always wearing his lackwit's smile—considered the Royal argument. It seemed the King's advisers wanted to pay Aristithorn. The King refused to give up a politically valuable daughter. The Vizier, however, found Norton's weakness.

The King, so the Vizier argued, would be lord of an empty city if the silence continued—the people were fleeing in thousands. Where, when the people were gone, did the Crown expect to apply taxes?

A telling blow! If there was anything Norton enjoyed more than lying, it was taxing his subjects to staggering. Insufferable demand, with no return, had made Norton one of the better known tyrants of his end of the world. Other monarchs envied him. These were distinctions he would not willingly surrender. Therefore, after breakfast, he put on his sad face and sent for Yselda. Sorrowfully, he told her what he had to do.

Yselda tearfully made apparent her willingness to sacrifice herself for her people.

Norton seemed delighted with Yselda's sorrow—but suspicious because her possessions were already waiting on a cart at the palace gate. However, he shrugged that off as he had all the other oddities about his child—unaware she had needs other than those complementing his own.

Bragi and the woman quickly departed.

His daughter gone, the King dried his tears and turned to business. He sent his bodyguard after the two, with orders to slay the northman and sorcerer. The wizard's death should cancel all his spells. He would then have his daughter back and could put her to good use.

However, a chuckling Aristithorn was watching from afar.

Bragi and Yselda left the silence, rode up a tall hill, over, and entered a smallish wood. Behind them, outside the wood, shimmerings appeared, coalesced into duplicates of the couple. The specters rode at right angles to the path of those they imitated.



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Norton's soldiers topped the hill, followed the decoys. Only later did they notice the chimeras had no cart—and then it was too late to find Bragi's carefully concealed trail. Somewhere afar, an old man chortled at his decption, then, weary, retired.

Bragi and Yselda covered most of the distance to the wizard's camp before nightfall. Yselda had ridden silently the afternoon long, eyes always on the northman. He grew wary of the hungers he saw there. He had his own desires, and one of the strongest was to avoid antagonizing Aristithorn.

But there was no avoiding the trap—all too well did the woman know how to bait it. Bragi was a long time getting to sleep. And rode with guilt the next morning. He was surprised when the wizard greeted him pleasantly.

"Hai!" the old man cried when they rode up. "So Norton *can* be beaten. Wonderful - wonderful - wonderful! Hello, my dear. Did you have a pleasant journey?"

"Indeed I did, Thorny," she replied, sighing. "Indeed I did."

A suspicious look passed across Aristithorn's face, but he was too eager to waste time worrying. "Thank you, thank you," he said to Bragi. "I hope you did well too."

Grinning, the northman held up a sack with the mark of the Itaskian Treasury.

"Ah, good. My friend, you've helped an old man beyond all hope of repayment. If you ever need a friend, drop by my castle in Necremnos. It's the one with the chained chimeras guarding the gates and the howls coming from inside—I suppose I'll give that up, now I'm retiring. Drop by any time. I've got to go. The silence will end when I do. One more magick, then I'll get to the business of renouncing my vows."

The wizard was so excited he flubbed his incantation three times. The fourth, while Bragi watched, saw woman, sorcerer, cart, and two donkeys vanishing in a fearsome cloud of smoke.

Shrugging the affair off as profitable and amusing, but of no great import, Bragi returned to Itaskia. He stopped by the Red Hart Inn for a stoop with old friends.

But the story did not end so easily. Bragi found himself outlawed for his part in the affair. Off he went, on an adventure into Freyland where he planned to liberate a fortune said to be lying in the heart of a certain mountian. The treasure he found—and the dragon guarding it. The worm won the ensuing battle handily.

The singed northman, outlawed all along the western coast, decided to impose on Aristithorn's hospitality. The wizard welcomed him warmly, immediately took him to see his children. Yselda had recently given birth to a pair of sturdy little blond, blue-eyed sons.

Innocently, Bragi asked, "How old are they?"

"Two months," Yselda replied. Confirmation of his suspicion was in her face.

Aristithorn said something about it being time to feed the vampires in the basement. He shuffled off. Bragi and Yselda went for a walk in the garden.

"Is he the man he claimed?" the

(cont. on page 129)



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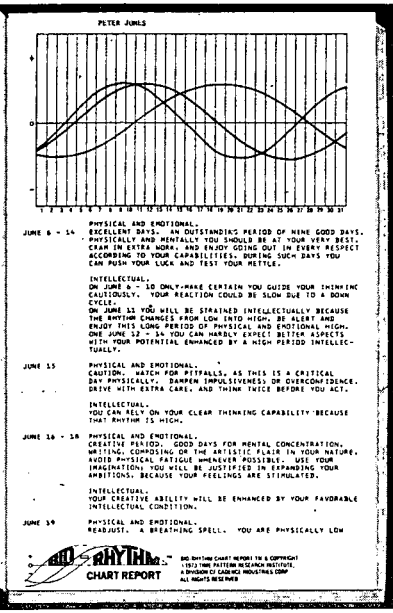
PETER JUHLS
JUNE 6 - 14
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
EXCELLENT DAYS. AN OUTSTANDING PERIOD OF NINE GOOD DAYS. PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY YOU SHOULD BE AT YOUR VERY BEST. CRAM IN EXTRA WORK, AND ENJOY GOING OUT IN EVERY RESPECT ACCORDING TO YOUR CAPABILITIES. DURING SUCH DAYS YOU CAN PUSH YOUR LUCK AND TEST YOUR METTLE.
INTELLECTUAL.
ON JUNE 6 - 10 ONLY-MAKE CERTAIN YOU GUIDE YOUR THINKING CAUTIOUSLY. YOUR REACTION COULD BE SLOW DUE TO A DOWN CYCLE.
ON JUNE 11 YOU WILL BE STRAINED INTELLECTUALLY BECAUSE THE RHYTHM CHANGES FROM LOW INTO HIGH. BE ALERT AND ENJOY THIS LONG PERIOD OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HIGH. ONE JUNE 12 - 14 YOU CAN HARDLY EXPECT BETTER ASPECTS WITH YOUR POTENTIAL ENHANCED BY A HIGH PERIOD INTELLECTUALLY.
JUNE 15
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
CAUTION: WATCH FOR PITFALLS, AS THIS IS A CRITICAL DAY PHYSICALLY. DANGER IMPULSIVENESS OR OVERCONFIDENCE. DRIVE WITH EXTRA CARE, AND THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU ACT.
INTELLECTUAL.
YOU CAN RELY ON YOUR CLEAR THINKING CAPABILITY BECAUSE THAT RHYTHM IS HIGH.
JUNE 16 - 18
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
CREATIVE PERIOD. GOOD DAYS FOR MENTAL CONCENTRATION, WRITING, COMPOSING OR THE ARTISTIC FLAIR IN YOUR NATURE. AVOID PHYSICAL FATIGUE WHENEVER POSSIBLE. USE YOUR IMAGINATION; YOU WILL BE JUSTIFIED IN EXPANDING YOUR AMBITIONS, BECAUSE YOUR FEELINGS ARE STIMULATED.
INTELLECTUAL.
YOUR CREATIVE ABILITY WILL BE ENHANCED BY YOUR FAVORABLE INTELLECTUAL CONDITION.
JUNE 19
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
READJUST. A BREATHING SPELL. YOU ARE PHYSICALLY LOW
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*Today's Health News in February of 1972 said, "Scientists have found evidence that our biological clocks can be meaningful in medical treatment."*

*The official Tactical Air Command Magazine "ATTACK" in the March 1972 issue reported in an analysis of accidents that 67% of the pilots involved had two or more Bio-Rhythm™ cycles in the minus portion.*

*A major chemical company testing the Bio-Rhythm™ cyclical theory in a pilot project covering 2 million man hours resulted in a 40% reduction of accidents in their plants.*

*Human errors can be reduced Flight Safety Foundation reported in their September / October newsletter concerning this human factor side of accident investigation and causation. A transport company in Japan which operates a fleet of some 700 busses, taxis and a primary railroad has been applying the Bio-Rhythm™ Theory to their operation. The results? As quoted in the Flight Safety Foundation newsletter, "In the first year of application the accident rate decreased by one-third as against a steeply increasing trend in the country as a whole"*

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# AFC

*Karl Pflock's first-published story was "Lifeboat," in the September, 1972 issue of our companion magazine,* AMAZING *SF. Of this story he tells us, "Herewith a story set in the same time frame as 'Lifeboat.' This one, 'AFC,' is not in the mainstream of my future; it's more an eddy along the way—just something that happened while time, and more important things, marched on . . ."*

## KARL T. PFLOCK

STEVEN LAYNE WAS going out of his mind. He was certain of it—or was he? Maybe those things were real, with their saucer eyes and writing tentacles . . . grasping, grasping!

It had begun with a ringing in his ears, soft and sibilant. No, it was more a hissing roar like the sound a child delights to in a sea shell.

At first he thought it was just his sinuses backing up; he had never acclimated to the muggy Washington summers. But the sound began to sort out into discrete voices, liquid voices crying in chorus.

The sound came at irregular intervals, softly at first but building in intensity over the weeks until the voices, the hungering voices, began to rise above the background.

Illustrated by JOE STATON



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He knew they were crying for his blood. He knew . . . but how did he know? There was nothing intelligible in what the voices said; the words were alien. But he *knew*!

And then, about two months ago, he began to see them. He was dozing on his living room aqua-lounger when the voices set up their cry and he saw the great swarm ranged about him. There were thousands of them, bobbing like tethered balloons, clinging to a lattice-work dome which arched above him. The scene was immersed in a murky gloom with light filtering down in great golden rays, as though through many fathoms of water.

The swishing babble of the voices surged into a roar which engulfed him and the many-armed creatures turned their attention away from him to the edge of the arena. With rising fear he saw the reason for their new interest: One of their kind was gliding purposefully toward him.

His wife shook him awake when he screamed and then she soothed him, calming him as best she could, telling him not to worry; it was just a dream—probably the result of that thriller on sv the night before.

Since that time, he had seen them again on three occasions, each time more clearly, more menacingly. It was real, not the hangover from too much stereovision! But it couldn't be real—that was why he finally decided to see a doctor.

Dr. Norton Bond, M.D., psychiatric hypnoanalyst, switched off his videofile scanner and rocked back in his chair, stretching his rangy body in deliberate, feline fashion. *This is a very interesting case,* he told himself.

He no longer doubted that a commitment would be necessary. Layne had deteriorated rapidly since Bond first saw him a month before. He had become more and more certain that his hallucinations were real and, as a result, was beginning to exhibit severe paranoid tendencies. A commitment was definitely in order.

*When Layne comes in tomorrow morning*— The office intercom chimed, interrupting Bond's musings. He leaned forward and flipped a switch on the commsole. "Yes, Anna?"

His receptionist's voice trembled slightly. "Mr. Layne is here, Doctor. He's very upset, shaking—looks like he's been pursued by the furies."

A glowing red light told Bond that Anna was on "hush." "Tell him I'll be with him in just a moment and advise Quincy I may need him and his sidekick on pronto notice; I think the clinic is going to have another guest tonight," he said grimly.

"Very well, Doctor."

While instructing Anna, Bond had activated the outer-office scanner and the commsole screen now showed a very disturbed Steven Layne. Preparing a hypogun, Bond studied him.

Layne was in his late thirties and, until the coming of the hallucinations, was a very ordinary life insurance and securities salesman. He had a wife and two kids, a mortgage on a nice condominium in a Northern Virginia enclave and a two-year-old Pontiac electric. He wore his hair shoulder length and was given to conservative grey jump suits and boots at work and his birthday suit at home. In college he



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considered himself a radical—but majored in business management—and, of course, had experimented with drugs, notably LSD. (A point which Bond thought pertinent. Long-delay effects from the use of hallucinogens were part of Bond's daily practice; although this patient's delusions seemed more concrete than the usual psychedelic groove.)

Ashen-faced, his long hair dishevelled, Layne was now pacing rapidly before Anna's desk, wringing his hands and shooting pleading glances toward Bond's office door.

Bond rose, noted the amber light indicating that Quincy and company were standing by, switched off the scanner and slipped the hypogun into his pocket. He moved across the warmly panelled room and, setting his face in the confident half-smile he used to greet distraught patients, opened the door. "Hello, Steve. It's good to see you."

Layne halted his pacing, his face a kaleidoscope of emotions. "Doctor . . . thank God . . . you must . . ." He broke off with a sob and buried his face in his hands.

Bond stepped forward, put an arm around Layne's shoulders and, with soothing words, led him gently into the inner-office. He guided him into one of the two aqua-loungers which were arranged side-by-side to afford a magnificent view of the capital.

Bond settled into the other and drew two cups of ice-water from the service table situated between them. He offered one to Layne who, quivering slightly, was staring a hole in the carpet.

"No . . . Doc," said Layne flatly.

"Go ahead; it's not polluted like the stuff in the plumbing. It's good spring water from the hills of West-By-God-Virginia." He slugged his down and watched Layne.

There was a long silence while Layne continued to gaze at the floor. Then he turned his eyes to the doctor, eyes filled with fear. "It happened again—today—worse than ever. It happened right in the office, my manager's office. What am I going to do?" he pleaded.

"Tell me about it, Steve."

"I . . . I can't. If I think about it I'll . . ." He began to sob.

"Okay, Steve. It's okay." Bond got up and walked around to Layne's side. "Lie back and we will do things like we have before—with hypnosis. You will tell me all about it and you won't be afraid. Just like an sv show; you'll be watching but on the outside looking in."

Layne seemed to relax slightly. He reclined the lounger and Bond pulled up a chair and sat beside and facing him. Reaching across Layne to the service table, he touched a control; drapes were drawn, lights were dimmed, and a stenocorder activated.

Bond decided he did not need the hypo. "All right, Steve, calm yourself. Put everything but thoughts of sleep, sweet sleep, out of your mind. You will concentrate on this." Bond held up a pencil light, which glowed like a jewel in the gloom of the office. "Concentrate and think of sleep, warm, deep sleep."

Presently Layne was in a heavy trance, breathing softly, his face a tranquil mask.

"Now then, Steve, you will go back



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to just before you last saw the 'creatures.' What were you doing?"

Layne's voice was matter-of-fact. "I had just returned from visiting a client, Mr. Dickenson Farley . . . important, very."

"You were in your office then?"

"Yes, in my office. I was excited because I'd finally got the old goat to buy a life policy. Took some doing, he thinks he'll live forever."

"Yes. What did you do when you returned to your office?" prodded Bond.

"Went to see Perkins, my boss. He thinks I have been slipping. You know—he doesn't—since the things have been after me." With these last words, Layne's voice carried a note of apprehension.

"Relax, Steve; there are no 'things' after you. There are no 'things' after you.

"Go on; tell me what happened."

"Yes, what happened. Well, Perk thinks I've been slipping, sales off, no new prospects. I had to tell him about Farley, prove I was still a first class dealer."

"And so you went to his office?"

"Yes. Went to his office. Was on the phone, so I waited."

"Mr. Perkins was on the phone?"

"Yeah, Perk was on the phone so I waited and the voices started."

"The 'creature's' voices?"

"Umm, them—the things. First time they've come in the day . . . when I'm awake."

Bond shifted slightly in his chair and leaned close to Layne's ear. Speaking softly and precisely he said, "Remember, Steve, you are an observer. You hear the 'voices' but they do not represent any harm to you. They do not represent any harm to you. All right?"

"Yes . . . no harm."

"Fine. Now, you are observing and listening to the scene this afternoon. Tell me exactly what you see and hear."

"The voices are chanting that 'football cheer' again. You know, the one I told you about before. It sounds like—more feels like—'kill, kill, kill.' The voices mean me."

"But you are not afraid are you, Steve?"

"No. Perk is hanging up the phone. He is asking me about Farley."

"Um hum. First tell me how you know what the chant means, Steve."

"I just know. It is as though I'm one of them, but not quite. They want me to die."

"Thank you, Steve. You are not afraid and you will continue to describe this afternoon now."

"Not afraid . . . Perk is surprised I sold Farley and he is asking about the details." Layne's face jerked violently. "I can't see him anymore. I'm in the arena. They—"

"Tell me about the arena. Look about you carefully."

"It is big, very big. A . . . uh . . . hemisphere of open latticework—metal. Looks like half of one of those electron shell models they use in physics classes.

"Can't see much of the framework now, though. It is covered with them."

"How do you know its structure if you cannot see it?"

"I've been there many times when no one but my training staff is there."



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"Training staff?"

"Yes. A . . . uh . . . gladiator must practice."

Bond decided to hold off on pursuing this new twist until the events of the afternoon had been described fully. "Continue your description please. Remember, you are just an observer."

"There are thousands of them, all staring at me, chanting, swaying in the shifting tide."

"Tide? Are you under water?"

"Yes, in the bosom of the Waarl Draath—the Great Sea." As he spoke, Layne's face became that of a proud soldier.

"I see," said Bond, puzzlement wrinkling his brow. "Go on, Steve."

"Steve? I am . . . I . . . Steve."

"Yes, you are Steve—Steven Layne. You are an observer. You can see through the eyes of the 'gladiator' but you—Steve—are safe, not threatened."

"Safe," mumbled Layne.

"Yes. Tell me what the members of the audience, the chanters, look like."

There was a silence as Layne seemed to concentrate on what he was "seeing." Bond shifted nervously in his chair.

"They look just like me, of course," said Layne in an annoyed tone, as if Bond had asked a ridiculous question.

"Like Steve Layne?"

Confusion washed over Layne's countenance. "No—like Zitryl, Waarl Baathnor. Like the gladiator."

It was apparent to Bond that Layne was having difficulty maintaining his "objective" point of view. "Fine. Remember, Steve, you are an observer, using 'Seetral's' . . . the 'gladiator's,' eyes."

"I am at the center of the arena floor waiting for the entrance of the challenger. He is entering the ring. The crowd roars. They expect to see me die today. They are going to be disappointed." Layne smiled broadly.

"Of course they are," said Bond as he thought, *What the hell is this? No acid flash, that's sure.* It reminded him of a seance he had attended as an undergraduate, with the "Dear Departed" speaking through a convulsive medium.

"Zitryl, Waarl Baathnor is champion of the Seven Worlds, never defeated. They are going to be much saddened," announced Layne proudly.

"The 'Seven Worlds'? What are the 'Seven Worlds'?"

Layne seemed puzzled. "You do not know of the imperium of the Draatheen?" he said with suspicion and a trace of scorn. "You are a Nuraal?" The last word was spat contemptuously.

Bond decided that he had better save any further probing until he had Layne committed; he felt instinctively that he was losing his patient to this alien personality, that Layne was being submerged by "Seetral." "Steve, Steven Layne, you are not—*not*—one of the 'creatures.' You are simply looking on. You—"

"Zitryl is Champion. Zitryl is Waarl Baathnor. All your cries and taunts will not avail you, worthless ones!" Layne—Zitryl—was shouting, bellowing his defiance to the crowd. "Neethor xepholyinaan ulaathnrat sholaath! Betnalf!" It was a war cry, a defiant whoop, a chest beating roar.

"Steve! Steven Layne," shouted Bond, straining to be heard over the



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alien littany. "Come away, Steven Layne. Free yourself from the 'gladiator.' "

"Ulaathnrat elaanthrof . . ."

"Steve, you are not one of them. You are Steven Layne and—"

". . . altquaal endorpaath!"

"*Steve*! Hear me, hear me. I am your doctor, Doctor Norton Bond. When I tell you to awaken—"

"Alenar *ventaal*!" It was a triumphant proclaimation.

Bond was face-to-face with Layne, repeating over and over, "You are Steven Layne. You are Steven Layne."

Layne's feral expression suddenly wilted away, melting into all-consuming horror. "Aghhh! No, no, no . . . I . . . help me, Doctor. Help . . ." His voice trailed into babble and he bolted upright, out of the trace.

Bond was unbalanced by Layne's sitting up and was almost thrown to the floor. Recovering, he realized Layne had broken out of the trance and he reached into his pocket for the hypogun. "Stay put, Steve. Everything will be—"

Layne lurched, wild-eyed, from the lounger and lunged for the drape shrouded view windows and the fourteen-story drop outside.

Bond threw his arms about Layne's waist and wrestled him to the floor. Layne was screaming to be freed and struggling with great strength.

Bond managed to heave himself on top and simultaneously slap the hypogun against Layne's arm. He held his patient for a few seconds and then the drug took over.

Bond stood, breathing heavily. He leaned across his desk, flipping a toggle on the commsole. "Okay, Quincy."

SATISFIED THAT LAYNE would be all right until morning—he had made the monitor bed hookups himself—Dr. Norton Bond stood in the lobby of the hospital trying to decide whether to head straight home or make a detour via the Jug 'n Joint. A glance at the rush-hour traffic sliding by below made up his mind for him. "I'll be across the way destroying a few brain cells for the next hour and then home for the evening," he advised the mini-topped receptionist.

The interconnecting slidewalk wisked him over the homing commuters to the office tower opposite, depositing him at the entrance to the Jug 'n Joint.

Gagging slightly on the acrid marijuana smoke that filled the room, Bond pushed his way through the crowd of young doctors and business types. He managed to find a seat at the bar and ordered bourbon on.

He had been at the bar perhaps fifteen minutes, wrapped up in the puzzle that was Layne's obsession—or possession—when his friend Lyle Monroe squeezed into the just vacated seat next to him. "I know things are bad, but they can't be that bad, Norton," said Monroe with a chuckle.

Bond looked up with a start, spilling part of his drink. "What? Oh, hi, Lyle. Just chewing on a case of mine. How's the mechanical synapse business?" Monroe was a computer sales engineer.

"Outstanding," Monroe frowned. "If the Neo-Luddities keep blowing up sixth generation systems at their current rate, this will be a bumper year." Monroe flagged the barkeep and



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ordered a drink for himself.

Bond noticed a fax of the science fiction telezine *Whither*? protruding from Monroe's hip pocket. "You still reading that stuff?" he said, jokingly.

Monroe pulled the dog-eared volume from his pocket and waved it under Bond's nose. "Do not sneer, doctor," he said in mock reproval. "This is the only relevant literary form there is."

"Okay, Lyle. Don't go into your song—"

Monroe was not listening. "In fact, there's a little piece in here about your alleged profession." He thumbed through the pages, found the story and laid the book on the bar. "Here it is. You should read it."

"Spare me the ordeal and gist it for me if you think it vital to my enlightenment," said Bond with exaggerated distaste. He pulled on his drink.

Monroe hesitated, followed Bond's lead, then plunged in with relish. "Well, it concerns a poor little building maintenance engineer—janitor—who hears voices and has outré visions. It scares him out of his wits, so he goes to a psychiatric hypnoanalyst—shrink—"

"No snide references, you overrated adding machine drummer."

"A thousand pardons, doctor," said Monroe archly, with a smile and a sweep of his hand. "Anyhow, he goes to a shr . . . *hypnoanalyst,* who's convinced it is a case of paranoid schizophrenia—perhaps brought on by delayed tripping or some such.

"During their third session, while under hypnosis, Stanley begins to babble a mixture of English and some strange language. He talks as though he was someone else. That is—"

"As though someone was speaking through him?" said Bond with interest.

"Right. Well, he raves about being a scientist on a planet circling a star which is almost eleven light-years from Earth. He explains that he has discovered that telepathic communication is instantaineous—not limited by the speed of light—and that he has been telepathically probing nearby space for intelligent life forms. He found Stanley," Monroe grinned, "and was rather disappointed with his intellectual capacity. 'Surely there must be others of your race with adequate minds?' he asks the doctor.

"Well the doc ain't buying, and he packs poor ol' Stan off to the funny farm.

"Months pass while the doc tries to convince Stanley that he's just a janitor and the alien scientist tries to convince the doctor that while that may be true most of the time, when he—the scientist—is speaking Stanley is a psi transceiver."

"No doubt he has automatic frequency control too."

Monroe ignored Bond's observation. "While all this is going on, our janitor-cum-adept is going out of his noggin. And one day a dimwitted orderly includes a fork with lunch and Stan does himself in."

"End of story."

"Not quite, wise guy. Some years later an astronomer announces that he has made telepathic contact with an intelligent race on a planet of the star Epsilon Eridani, located some 10.75 light-years from Earth. His contact is a scientist who had established a link earlier but could not seem to make

(cont. on page 65)



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*David Bunch is back!* Yes *and with another Pointed Fable, another Unique Vision of the* underbelly of humanity! *For this time Bunch has a Tale to Relate about a—*

# MOMENT OF TRUTH IN SUBURB JUNCTION

## DAVID R. BUNCH

ALL I KNOW is what I see, and some of that's pretty crazy. But here are these night-looking people running in a mad hurry, coat tails flying back, dress hems swirling up, shoes going *clat-clat clat-cleat clatclat.* And here I am in an alley, loafing, so beat-out tired and unvital I can't even decide whether to get up or lie back harder. And if I do get up, am I going to walk around the corner to Nick's and cadge for a beer, or am I going a block down to Joe's, who sometimes gives me a beer? Joe and I were together in a war, 'way back, wars ago, so it's old times makes him do it, I guess . . .

Finally I decide to just lie back harder, save up my energy for a while and then go around the corner to Nick Rogota's place, where most of the action usually is anyway . . . .

THERE ISN'T a soul at Nick's today but Nick! and he is now wiping the bar in a sort of furious way with one hand and breaking glasses with the other—working in such a flurry that I can hardly see him . . . I notice through a haze of smoke how there is evidence that a lot of people have just left fast from Nick Rogota's place. I see where one barfly has gone off so unexpectedly he leaves a half-smoked butt, and some dame in a hurry has forsaken a lipstick and a pink glove. Nick is raking this truck off like the junk it is, flips me a half Camel and growls, "Take it and go. Not open. Closin' it up!" Hey, since when does Nick Rogota close up so early in the morning, on a Thursday? "What's up?" I yell. But Nick won't answer, just goes ahead working in that furious way, mouth buttoned up like a clam. When he is through he comes around the bar, and I can feel him take me by an arm, as he has for years now, but for some reason more gently this time, and he spins me through a door. I never get mad at Nick about these things, because I know it's just business, but this is the first time he's ever done it so early in the day. I



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wonder about that. Maybe everyone has taken religion? Then I see him hurry to the back, grab his hat and coat and a little bundle that may be his lunch, or who knows? and head out. He locks the door in a kind of fury; I can hear the key scratching around for the hole while his hand shakes. But he gets it locked, throws the key away, also the bundle that may be his lunch, or who knows? and then he takes off. For a fat man built like two misshapen boulders strapped side by side he really moves! For Nick that pace he's making is hurry. What I mean to say is, Nick is no more than one block behind the tail end of Suburb Junction taking off for the wide yonder. The tail end is Miss Burganhaney. She's the first and second grade teacher, whose age is a big secret, and she's built like half of a straight and level stretch of prairie railroad track——long—very few lumps. And she can move! I watch them go. From my comfortable position where I am, across two bricks and a cinder, I think *What a picture!* Nick no more than a block behind Miss Burganhaney and coming up fast! What will he do if he overtakes Miss Burganhaney!? But I jerk that train off the track in a hurry, because I know they're just getting out of town like the rest of the adult population of Suburb Junction must be, all thousand or so of it, and no one is chasing anyone. Or do I know that? All I know is what I see, and sometimes that can be real funny-crazy, I think.

Then along comes this little man, the only person I've seen in Suburb Junction all morning who's not hurrying, and he's a stranger. He's just sidewalking along, putting one little black high-button shoe in front of the other in a mincing step as though he has all of a whole big lifetime in which to walk down one short street in Suburb Junction. But according to sense he doesn't have that much time, because he's very old. A beard of startling white spreads across his shiny black coat, and his chalky face, I notice as he comes in closer, is one mass of going-together wrinkles and crow's-feet. He sees me. "Heay?" he says. His voice is not old and screechy as I expect. It is low and full, with sort of a jolly croak in it. Sounds something like a bullfrog does, when mister frog is not using all his power maybe, but is just loafing by the big lily pad and moowroonking a little seduction to keep practical; or more like a bull maybe, bellowing low in his pen from across forty acres of summer cornfields. "Heay?" he says.

"Yeah?" I say and try to lie out straighter, knowing it isn't dignified the way I am across those bricks. "Heay," he says, "what-a-ye doin'?"

"Restin'," I say.

"Restin' air ye?" he says. "So yeh're tired, air ye? Got spring fever, huh?" And I admit that I'm resting, am tired and have got spring fever. By that time he has come up to where I am lying in the alley, but he stays in the street. He sets a little black case down he has been carrying in his right hand, and he shakes the sleeves of his shiny dark coat back a small way from his wrists. Then he swivels his hands in a fluttery way, in a spread-fingered way, like I've seen



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men do who are preparing for something delicate. Like rip off something high-class on a piano maybe, or milk the Guernsey when they don't very much know how. "So yeh're tired, air ye?" he intones and spreads wide his legs and raises his hands high and assumes the position of exhortation, like maybe a camp-out minister might. "So yeh're tired?" I admit again that I'm tired, and I admit that I've been tired ever since I don't remember from 'way back when, and it's been a long time since anyone troubled to ask, and thank you, Sir! "They call *you* a bum, don't they?" he asks, very seriously, but, not unkindly, so I don't get up and make fists. I just correct him politely. "They call *me* a no-good bum."

He unbuttons his coat, puts his hands around under it and clasps them behind him. Then he flexes up and down on his short thin legs, not moving out of his tracks much, about two feet in front of me, but just letting his torso enjoy a nice bounce in the smudgy air of this factory suburb. I imagine he is thinking. Then suddenly he straightens up, checks the body in the half bounce and flips his hands out from under his coat. The hands are spread wide and seem ready to shove down toward me, as if they could push all that grimy, befouled air in front of them out past me and away in a great rush. The hands, I notice, don't hold a thing, and there's no jewelry on the fingers; but he says, "I've got somethin' fer ye." *Uh oh!* I think, here it comes, the little honeydrip lecture, the *message*. And lordy, I've had a-plenty of these in my time. I haven't always been on my uppers in grubby little Suburb Junction. I've been on the skids, first-class, in some mighty flashy big towns in my day.

"Yeess, I've got somethin' fer ye," he intones. "I didn't know about givin' it to you, because I'm not sure *you* need it as bad as the rest. *You* already see pretty clearly how bad things are fer you, I s'pect. And besides, you haven't worked enough to tear up much; you never burned much gas or made much trash. *Ha!* Your sins are of the opposite. But anyway, I thought maybe ev'rybody ought to be down there together, the loafers along with the hot-shots, the resters along with the go-getters; those who'd burn it all down without a blink, if they thought that'd put them out front, along with the ones who'd just let the world go by. So I came back through, lookin' fer the bums and the stragglers to go with the hot-shots." Then he bends down, stiff, like he is hinged only at the hips, and when he bobs back up he holds a little black bottle he has taken out of the black case. I notice the skull and crossbones in sharp yellow on the black and the initials S-S-R. "Hey . . .!" I yell. But before I can finish my yell, he doubles up until he looks like a grasshopper ready to zoom, and he leaps over and straddles me. He jerks a syringe out of his vest then, fills it full of liquid from the black bottle and applies that liquid through a raggedy hole in my two and a half shirts and my under-shirt before I can say *Hey don't!* or *Please don't!* or even *No!* Then he



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jumps back, or I push him off; it's hard to know exactly the action there, because by now I'm up and going and I don't look anywhere I've been . . .

I can hear the little man cackling behind me as I head out the way the others have gone just in time to see Nick in the smudge and haze, going over a big hill, still holding the pace, but I imagine by now about two and a quarter blocks behind Miss Burganhaney, who is built, as I said, for speed. I've never been this way out of town before and when I get to the top of the hill, there's just mostly nothing there in front of me but a lot of gray, gray distance, and not a soul to be seen. But what I do see pretty soon is sure plenty strange. In a little wood off to the side of the big road the saplings are crashing and thrashing like a storm going in or a storm coming out, or both; the birds are leaving fast, and the earth-bound animals are getting out—toads, frogs, rabbits, snakes, stringy cats, old dogs, chipmunks, and I don't know what all else—almost every kind of an animal except man coming out of that timber. I plow on through this mess of stuff that is getting out fast, and I rush in to where the trees have been dancing and thrashing the hardest. And what I see in there is kind of a revelation, it's so surprising.

They aren't fighting in there exactly, and they aren't playing tag in there either. They're just lying there, deathstill, in the middle of a big soupy excavation that has once been a mining pit for low-grade high-pollution coal. And their eyes are turned up toward the sky, and by the way their heads are cock-angled I figure they are listening for some kind of a fearful sound, even while they are looking skyward for deliverance. I rush in to join them; I join their attitudes, and by now I'm thinking we are certain to be waiting for some big thing to hit, maybe even the Day of Judgment, to pay us all back for the way we've lived. We lie there and we wait there, and in the sweat and the waiting it would seem that time loses most of its dimension. And I'm feeling sure if it's the Day of Judgment I'll have about as much chance slipping through as a rat would at a brand-new, mouse-proof steel corncrib.

Near the sundown of the day by straining we can just see him, just over the edge of the pit, like a bouncing cork far-out, hanging in the haze. It is the little man come back, bobbing jauntily down the road, not in a hurry, but come strolling, just loafing, as though he has a whole big sky full of time to do this one nice piece of road from Suburb Junction. As he comes nearer, we see that he is not alone; about the time he seemed to stop hanging in the air and hit solid ground, he had been joined by other things. All the animals are following him now—the toads, the frogs, the rabbits, the snakes, the stringy cats, the old dogs, the chipmunks, and I don't know what all else, almost every kind of a thing, even the birds flying low-cover.

The party turns off the road, comes down toward the timber and into it. When they arrive at the edge of the big swampy hole, the animals sit down on



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their haunches—those that have haunches do this, the rest make do with what they have—in a loose half-circle around the little man. He regards us coolly for a time while our glances flick out toward him. I don't know what the others are thinking, but I'm thinking we're going to get our just deserts just about now. And pretty rough ones, too.

Then he starts to speak in that surprising, low, small voice that sounds like a tuned-down bullfrog, but more like Ferdinand, maybe, saluting muted-like from across a field: "Folks, Suburb Junction was lucky—selected out! I picked this particular populated section of the world to try out my exclusive, special, never-before-done, new-formula S-S-R shots—Sudden-Shocking-Realization! On the grownups. The young folks, of course, were exempted, fer now. Most of you I just shot with a needle full fer instant action, and you took right off like a pup covered with king-size fleas on top of a scalded back. Others, I knew needed a little bit of time. Like Nick here, fer instance, needed a little leeway to close up his place prope'ly, heh heh. So I fed him and his kind the good old delayed-action Sudden-Shocking-Realization shot. Then they took off too, all to come down to this big strip-pit hole, because that's the way each and ev'ry one of you felt, and small wonder. I don't blame anyone fer that feelin'!

"Now, I don't have to tell any of you what happened when that Sudden-Shocking-Realization formula took hold. You each and ev'ry one say yer Sudden-Shocking-Realization selves flash out there and be *clearly* revealed, like a big black cinder on an ash heap in a pile of oily-mud in the front parts of yer brains. *Real strinker clinkers!* And you just wanted to go run and jump into the biggest-blackest-deepest hole you could find, pull that hole in on top of you and lie there—fer ever-and-ever. And, as I hinted, I don't blame any one of you people one bit fer reactin' like that. Fer bein' so terribly terrible, and under like circumstances, I'm sure I should have felt the same. Exactly!

"But Suburb Junction is lucky again! Selected out! I'll show why." And suddenly he quite dipped over, just bent nimbly from the waist, and, looking like a good puppet should, with his knees held stiff and his flailing and flashing arms and hands going, he busily hummed a tune while he was setting out vials from the little black case. These vials were a cheery sunshiny color and they held fluid that had an amber glow. A small motif of sun and flowers decorated each bottle, as far as I could tell, and between sun and flowers were clearly the letters A-C . . . "Folks, step right up and receive these new shots. Then go on back to town and quit scarin' these nice animals. And quit some of that smokin' and smoggin' and burnin', too. *Quit it! You hear?*

"*Yes!* these new shots will sure fix things, if yeh've learned any lessons from recent times. And I mean from *very* recent times. *Hey!* Like today."

While the others were crowding around, like a big bunch of country sheep, to get these new injections, I felt



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some of the old sand start to come back up in my craw. And I thought: If he wants me to have a new shot, he can just come and find me on those two bricks and a cinder, like he did before. So I took off, betting I'd never see him again. But some spiteful, baleful, uncompromising, but honest-minded little quirk in me made me willing to give him a fair test against any and all conditions—past and present and the future to come—if he actually should show up and give me that fix-it-up injection. But I was sure betting he wouldn't . . .

I had just got comfortable on the bricks again, was compromising with the cinder and was ready to try for a big comfortable dream, maybe a really relaxed, rewarding kind of vision for once, where everyone is cheerful, all crowded around, telling stories and jokes and buying each other good drinks of good cheer . . . Then I hear it.

"Heay?" it says.

And there he is, like a little cloud in a kind of blaze and halo, but coming in fast, with that big needle and that amber-colored vial that has the pretty sun-and-flowers motif and the legend A-C. "*Another chance!* Even the village bum . . ."

I leap up in a rush and hurry away down the alley, and it truly is morning again, with a brand new sun shearing up through all that fog and all that factory air.

—DAVID R. BUNCH

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Stuff Of Time (cont. from page 20)

"I can try," says the trainer.

"The best in the world."

"You don't understand," says Alfred, poised like a big cat. "I don't want to be very good. I want to be tops. The best."

"I understand," the trainer says.

But he does not understand. For the trainer is unlike Alfred. He is like you and me. The trainer is not an ambitious man.

—GORDON EKLUND

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AFC (cont. from page 58)

anyone understand the truth. He is especially critical of a certain hypnoanalyst, thinks he was too specialized and unscientific." Monroe dug an elbow into Bond's ribs, "Something I've been saying about the whole profession for a long time."

ON A WATER-WORLD orbiting a star some few parsecs farther from Terra than Epsilon Eridani, Zitryl, Waarl Baathnor, was nervously explaining to a Healer the seizures of fear and foreboding which had been plaguing him for more than three Cycles. "The worst came to me today just as I was about to administer Ending to my challenger. It was as though I, Zitryl, had become a lowly Nuraal. I was terrified, I who have never known fear. Help me, Healer; I am possesed."

The Healer coiled his tentacles in contemplation and thought, *This is a very interesting case.*

—KARL T. PFLOCK



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*Barry Malzberg (whose* Beyond Apollo *recently won the John Campbell Memorial Award) returns to our pages with a brief but compelling glimpse into the meaning of a religion . . .*

# ISAIAH

## BARRY MALZBERG

So I take myself to the Lubavitcher Congregation in Williamsburgh, Brooklyn. Williamsburgh is still the largest reservoir of Chassidism in the western world although things have hardly been so brisk since the Lubavitcher rabbi himself died and many in the community, strangulated by urban pressures, moved to bucolic New City or points even further north. "I need to discuss the issue with someone who speaks a good English," I say hopefully to the few depressed Chassidim, a bare minyan who are chanting over prayerbooks in the vestry. My command of Hebrew or Yiddish is really almost nil. It is disgraceful for someone in my position to have almost no grasp of tongues but what can I do? It is all that I can manage to keep up with the research aspects.

"My English is acceptable," a middle-aged Chassid says, standing and beckoning me into the room. "What do you want?" He gestures toward a rack in the corner on which tallises are hung, prayerbooks perched. "You may join us, certainly."

"I don't want to join you," I say and then realizing that this sounds discourteous and, "I'm not a practicing Jew."

"All Jews must practice," the middle-aged man says wisely enough. The others nod somnolently, return to their chanting. "In fact," he whispers, "practice makes perfect."

"It's not that," I say.

Very ill at ease I sit convulsively upon a near chair, take out a handkerchief and wipe my face in little streaks as the chassid moves over to join me. "Perhaps after the services," he says, "after the afternoon prayers we can talk."

Afternoon prayers. Evening prayers, morning prayers, prayers upon arising and eating. They live their lives within a network of prayer; not, of course, that this can be said to have done them any real good. On the other hand, who am I



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to judge? The only prayers which I have ever attempted were not within the framework of organized religion. "Not good enough," I croak, "we must talk now. I have very little time."

The chassid shrugs. "Time is an abstraction," he says, "it is self-willed, self-created." A bit of a metaphysician. The others have dropped out of our discussion. They are immersed in their prayers, each at a different rate in a different way. Voices mesh and part. This is the essence of chassidic ritual I am given to understand, the individuality of worship, but actually I know very little of forms. "Perhaps you're in the wrong place," the chassid says kindly. "Are you looking for someone?"

"*No!*" I shout convulsively. Faces turn, chairs scatter, eyes look at me with great interest. With a few shattered breaths I regain control of myself. "I am not looking for anyone," I say, "I am looking for information."

"What information?"

"Judaism is a messianic religion, is that not so? You believe that the Messiah has not yet come to earth but that he will and that when he does peace and justice will reign. Unlike the Christian religion which holds that the Messiah already came and went, will return for the second coming, you believe that he has yet to appear. Am I right?"

"It is slightly more complex than that," my friend says, wincing at his prayerbook. "There are various levels of meaning."

"But is that not so?"

"You are discussing an entire religion my friend. It cannot be summed up in a few words. There are some Jews who believe that the Messiah will come but there are others who are not so sure, who believe that Judaism exists only to bear witness that he will never come. Since the great purges and sufferings of the middle of the twentieth century, in fact—"

"All right," I say, breathing excitedly. "That's true. I understand that part of it. Hitler and the exterminations made it impossible for many Jews to accept a messianic version of religion; the Messiah would not allow such things to come to pass without intervention if He existed. But messianism is built deeply into the religion. All of the rituals, all of the prayers, as far as I know are built upon an acceptance, a belief, a waiting—"

"I have had enough of this," the chassid says, standing. "Doubtless this is of great interest to you but you ought to seek a rabbi, a scholar, perhaps someone at the theological institute with whom you could discuss all of this. This however is a place of worship."

"But what are you worshipping if you won't even talk about the basis?"

The chassid, as if from a great height, gives me a penetrating look and tucks his prayerbook under his arm. "If you must equate worship and understanding," he says, "you are missing the point entirely." He walks away. The minyan continues to drone but obviously I have been dismissed and after a while I leave the Lubavitcher vestry quietly, trying to hold myself against a scream or an explosion.

So I TAKE MYSELF to a reform congregation in Massapequa, Long Island and there on a dull Monday afternoon meet and speak with the assistant rabbi, a young man with round eyes and a distracted expression. "Of course it's a messianic religion," he says. "Ju-



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daism is structured on the coming of the Messiah." He looks at a wall; I stare at some photographs on his desk: a young girl, a baby, a snapshot of what appears to be a graduation scene, "But I'm afraid that I can't solve your problem otherwise. No one knows when the Messiah will come and this sense of mystery too is built deeply into the religion. It is a religion without answers of almost any sort."

He is trying hard and there is no hypocrisy in my young Massapequa rabbi. Really, he is trying very hard and he is also relatively learned. Nevertheless a sense of woe overtakes me, a feeling of disengaged purposes and weariness and I stand, looking over his shoulder at some religious emblem on the wall. "It's hopeless," I say, "it's hopeless."

"What's hopeless?" the rabbi says without much interest. Really, they have enough trouble in Massapequa: zoning, taxation, declining membership and attendance even on the high holy days. I can understand his problem.

"There's just no clear framework," I say rather pointlessly and leave him. In the parking lot I have a stab of regret; I really should go back and apologize for my abruptness but I decide that it would only be a gesture. Truly now: the young rabbi's problems, much as my own, would only be unduly complicated by the coming of the Messiah and now I feel a blade of panic; my options are running out.

So I TAKE MYSELF to a Thursday night discussion meeting of the Ethical Culture society, a large proportion of which is composed of intellectual, disaffected Jews. There is some problem filling in the gaps between these encounters but I do the best I can and limbo is not particularly unpleasant if one keeps expectations limited. "I think we have to discard the entire Messianic approach," the discussion leader says when I politely raise my question. People stare; a newcomer, particularly a talking newcomer, is always interesting. "It is best to think of Messianism as a metaphor for that mysterious exaltation which can come from keeping ritual. Ritual equals religion equals ecstasy in some sects. The vitality of the chassids demonstrates this, I think."

"Then there's no messianic underlay any more you'd say?"

"Not any more than there are physiological reasons for the dietary laws," the discussion leader says. "I think we should get off this topic, however. Judaism is of marginal interest to most of us and we try to look at the world more eclectically, bonding together many religions, many observances. Not that Judaism isn't a *worthy* subject of discussion," he adds apologetically aware, perhaps, of some disapproval in my face, "but we try to take the best from the best and reassemble. Messianism is deleterious since we know in post-technological America that the solution to our problems must lie within ourselves, that we must change the world as we see it and that our lives consist of what is known on this earth and nowhere else."

He nods somewhat emphatically and the faces turn from me back toward the podium. There are several unescorted young girls for whom I feel a certain distant attraction but it would be rankest hypocrisy to stay, my business concluded, on that basis. I leave the lecture hall quietly and try to get to a

(cont. on page 113)



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*Haldane's dilemma is a cruel one: to survive he must shed the identity and image in which he has cloaked himself for as long as he can remember. He must cease to be—*

# THE SON OF BLACK MORCA

## ALEXEI & CORY PANSHIN

*(Third of Three Parts)*

## Illustrated by JEFF JONES

SYNOPSIS

The simple easy world of a boy of sixteen has been broken in a minute.

HALDANE is the one son of BLACK MORCA, War King of the Gets and as much of a ruler as the ancient land of Nestor can boast. In Haldane's grandfather's time, the Gets had swept into the West and there met the warriors and the wizards of the Western lands of Chastain, Palsance and Vilicea. With Ultimate Spells, the Western wizards had sent the Gets in retirement back to Nestor and destroyed themselves, for magic takes a price and the price of the Ultimate Spells is death for a wish.

Morca is a man of hairy ambition. He seeks to enlarge his dun, his hill fort. He, among all the magic-fearing Gets, keeps a wizard. He ignores all the old Gettish ways and makes new practice. He seeks to unite the wild Get barons behind him and to take the Western lands from South Cape to the Hook, from Orkay to Grelland, from Lake Lamorne to the sea. He would become King of the Gets after Western fashion—no, more than a king. He would become Lord of the Get Empire. And he would make Haldane his lieutenant and his heir.

The world of Haldane is smaller than the world of Morca. Haldane has been raised in the safe confine of Morca's dreams. He knows little more than Morca's dun and the country close by. He knows Nestorians as cattle, as peasants, as serfs. He knows Gets as barons and carls. He knows no Gettish women—since Haldane's mother, Freda, died in a fall, Morca has kept a celibate hall. Haldane is made of more common-seeming stuff than great Morca, who is larger than life usually allows. He would follow his father if he were allowed and if he had any clear idea how he might. But it is his private grief that Morca is as rough and bluff with him in private as he is in public, even though he speaks of Haldane as "lieutenant". And he makes promises to Haldane and breaks them lightly.

On the late afternoon of a cool day in mid-spring, a Libera's Day falling in that month when the sun is in the sign of the Wurox, Libera's beast, Morca has gone raiding with a party of barons and carls into Chastain. Though Haldane was promised a place in this party, he has been left. Now, in a moment when he has gone hunting beyond



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the limits set by Morca, he shoots at a pheasant and meets a witch. The witch is JAEL, a Nestorian ancient. She makes frightening prophecy. She speaks of people in Nestor of whom the Gets have never heard, who will yet live there in a day, soon to come, when the Gets are only a name. She says that the Goddess, Libera, is awake and walks again in the West, her portents everywhere. The Gets will meet a bloody end on Stone Heath, Jael says, and Haldane will be the instrument of the Goddess. When he is ready, when he is ripe, the Goddess will come and snatch his soul from his body.

She marks Haldane for the Goddess—she strikes him with her staff and a tooth chips. While his vision is blurred, he hears Jael say that Morca is now returned to the dun bringing a foreign bride for Haldane. And she disappears magically.

When Haldane reaches the dun, it is to find Morca just arrived—and with him are LOTHOR, King of Chastain, and Lothor's daughter, PRINCESS MARTHE. By surprise and force of arm, Morca has arranged a marriage for Haldane.

For one brief moment, Morca is able to speak to Haldane of his intentions. He convinces Haldane that it is in him that Morca's greatest hopes reside. Morca makes a baron of Haldane—he gives him an earnest young carl, Hemming Paleface. But Haldane takes Hemming's oath of loyalty and makes him truly his own man, the first of his army. Haldane's dreams are as nearly fulfilled as life will allow. It is true that he cannot like Marthe, who is short, plump and unappealing, but as Morca says, "If you don't like her, we have rooms enough to keep her in. The story needn't suffer."

Haldane is happy, though sometimes his tongue worries at his chipped tooth. Others are less happy. One is an old man Morca keeps as a nay-sayer and a source of the old knowledge of the Gets. OLD SVEIN accuses Morca of overreaching himself and forgetting the old ways, and blames Morca's wizard, OLIVER, as the source of Morca's gross ambitions. But Oliver also is doubtful.

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He suggests that many barons will not like this marriage. Too much power has been set astir. Oliver intends to study his book of magic: "It may yet take an Ultimate Spell to keep what you are taking."

Oliver is a strange little man. He does not fight, which makes him nothing among the Gets, and he came to the service of Morca in flight from powerful enemies in the West. On the other hand, he has made a secure place of importance for himself among these Gets, these dangerous men who above all hate and fear magic. Oliver once had charge of Haldane's education until Black Morca discovered that Oliver had taught Haldane more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. He taught Haldane a spell—the Pall of Darkness. Morca had punished them both in ways each could understand, and now keeps them separate.

Life is at its best at Haldane's betrothal banquet. Morca has pink ribands in his beard, and Haldane has been given a great chair of his own, like Morca's but not as great as Morca's. But then, suddenly, Lothor, the little effete Western king, maligns all of Morca's fathers. He stands and points to Morca's new doors, stolen from Chastain. They burst open and in press Morca's Gettish enemies—EGIL TWO-FIST, COUGHING ROMUND and others. Barons and carls, and Lothor's knights of Chastain, fresh come from killing the watch and throwing open the gates. There are traitors, too, among those who have sworn themselves to Morca: AELLA OF LONG BARROW, a minor man befitted best for long dull errands, and IVOR FISH-EYE, who has been hunting in the woods in company with Lothor's knights, for the wurox, Libera's beast, which has been seen for the first time in many generations.

The fighting is hot. Many are killed. Haldane and his carl set their backs together and fight. Hemming is killed and Haldane is struck in the head. He wakes confused. He lies among the dead. Then he sees Morca fighting, surrounded and alone. Then, close at hand, he sees Oliver calling down the Chaining of Wild Lightning, an Ultimate Spell. Haldane finds himself mumbling, too, the only spell he knows.

Oliver is magnificent. He stands with arms spread, waiting for the white tongues of flame and his death along with the death of Morca's enemies. But no flames come. Ivor Fish-eye waits his chance, and when Morca is engaged, he slips in behind him and kills him with a knife. Then he holds the bloody knife high in exultation.

Haldane comes to his feet, his lips moving through the last automatic mumble of the Pall of Darkness. He is dizzy and nearly falls from his wound. Then the old wave of cold he has known before rolls over him again. He is invisible. And so it seems is Oliver. As happened before, the spell has affected them both. Led by Oliver, the two escape into the night as the traitors and enemies howl for Haldane's death.

After that, all is confusion for Haldane. His sureties are all at an end. Haldane suffers from the sudden overset of his world and from his head wound and from the effects of his spell. (As Oliver has said to him: "Magic always takes its price without exception. It is the one thing I know about magic.") He remembers the betrothal banquet only dimly and Oliver must frequently remind him of what has happened. Haldane does not remember Oliver's failed Ultimate Spell nor his own lesser successful spell, and Oliver does not tell him of either.

With the aid of magic, Oliver disguises them. Himself he disguises as an old cock-eyed red-haired sailor man from the free duchy of Pellardy—a Nestorian. Haldane he disguises as a cloddish Nestorian boy. Oliver would have them escape over the Trenoth River into Palsance, but Haldane insists they must seek aid of his mother's father, ARNGRIM, in his dun at Little Nail. Ultimately, Oliver agrees, for he is sapped by his spell and distressed by his own large failure, and he needs Haldane.

The two set out along the Pellardy Road for Little Nail. They are come upon in the afternoon by Aella of Long Barrow and



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several carls, who are searching for Haldane and Oliver and the Princess Marthe. Haldane plays peasant boy, grubbing in the river bottom for clams. And though he speaks to the Gets in Gettish, Oliver's spell is powerful enough that they are taken for Nestorians.

Haldane is confused. He knows not what is real. Is he Haldane or is he the peasant boy, GILES? Is he Haldane dreaming that he is a peasant? Is he Giles dreaming that he is Haldane? And more and more he grows to doubt the old man, SAILOR NOLL, with whom he walks, who tells him transparent lies, such as that Morca is dead.

They stop at sunset at a peasant hut where Sailor Noll tells stories to win them dinner. Haldane sags into a corner, mind whirling. More and more he is certain that the people and things about him are not realities at all, but merely plausibilities designed to trap him in the confusion of a horrible false dream. Noll explains his grandson's stony stare: "He was fetched a great clout by a swinging boom when he was small and it knocked all the sense out of him." But before the meal is over, a peasant arrives with the plausible news that Morca is dead and his head now sits on a pole over the gate of his own dun. Haldane challenges the dream. He strikes the peasant. And he and Noll are summarily cast forth into the night.

That night, as they lie asleep in the forest, Oliver is wakened by the screams of Haldane. He manages to subdue the boy only with difficulty. Haldane says that he was being taken by a wurox from the safety of his bed. He points at Oliver and says, "You brought me back into the dream! I was home safe in my bed and you dragged me back to this again."

Oliver replies: "If you were home safe in your bed, that was the dream. All that you thought was a dream was true. All but this wurox that you dreamed."

But when they set out in the morning, Oliver sees the track of an animal circling around their camp—the great split hoof marks of kine, twice the size of any mortal cow that Oliver has ever seen.

Haldane is certain now that his strange companion, Sailor Noll, is not to be trusted. He seeks the opportunity to be shed of him, and he finds the opportunity when they seek shelter out of the rain at Leaning Rock. He steps outside to relieve his bladder, and then runs away into the hills. He takes refuge in the Get-shattered remains of a Wild Village, repeating again and again to himself that he is Haldane, not Giles, no longer the Nestorian boy, no longer the plaything of the Goddess. He strips a stalk of grass and picks up a tiny spider with it. He watches it run from end to end, seeking escape, and he smiles to see it scramble. And while he is thus absorbed, he is given a sudden shake. A wild man dressed in skins and carrying an axe, a high-smelling bogey, asks him who he is. He will not deny himself again. He says, "I am Haldane, son of Black Morca."

In that late afternoon, Sailor Noll is brought into the camp of DUKE GIRARD, he who would rule here in the Duchy of Bary if the Gets did not exist. Oliver is confused and tired. He seeks the comfort of a fire, a fair portion, a place for his head and time to regain his mind's balance. As the sun sets, Oliver stands before Girard and divers other Nestorian outlaws. He has the price of a night's hospitality on his tongue—news of the oversetting of Morca—and his true self is invisible.

Girard is a young man of high sensibility and higher fashion returned from exile in Palsance to lead his people against the Gets. Oliver speaks to him as he stands with his back to a great old raised stone.

"Is it news of the train to Palsance?" asks Girard. "We all shall be less cross when the ambock has arrived. And my wardrobe."

As they talk, it suddenly becomes evident to Oliver that this dreamy-eyed young boy sees him as a portent. Girard sees through Sailor Noll, not to Oliver behind, but to words of import clothed in strange human form. And with a sudden surge of heart, Oliver realizes that Girard sees truly. In this camp, with the news he bears, he is a portent.



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He tells his news portentously—and he is understood by none but Girard. The other outlaws do not know of what he speaks because the names are not Nestor and the Gets and Lothor and Black Morca. But Girard says to the outlaws: "Listen to me, my men. Black Morca is dead and his head sits on a pole like a cabbage! The Gets have fallen on each other with the fury of their own battle pigs. Now is the moment for us to strike them as we may. Have faith and follow me."

His men stir at that, and continue to stir as someone arrives. It is Girard's friend and companion, Mainard, returned from Palsance. Mainard says that the country is aswarm with Gets. He has had to dig a cache and leave the greater part of what he has brought behind him—including Girard's new wardrobe. All that he has been able to bring is the ambock. The outlaws cry hurray and turn to dinner and Mainard's beer.

His moment as a portent behind him, Oliver sits down alone to his meat and beer. But his solitude is ended abruptly by a voice that cries, "I am Haldane, the son of Black Morca! I will kill all you dream creatures!"

Oliver stands to say that this simple lad, this Nestorian boy has been inhabited by the voice of Haldane, the son of Black Morca: "What he says, Haldane would say. Harken to him."

Haldane says, "I know you, Sailor Noll. I will kill you first, devious one. Are you master of the dream?"

At that, Duke Girard steps forth to contend with him. "Do you dream, too?" he asks Haldane. And he matches dreams with the boy.

All Haldane can say is: "I do not know what I dream, but I know that I dream." But Girard says, "In my dream, Morca is dead and his head sits on a sharpened stake."

Girard claims himself to be the liege of Libera. "You cannot face me in my glory. I have bound myself to Libera and I will rule the world and write poems to her."

But the witch Jael told Haldane that *he* would be Libera's Liege. He says: "I understand nothing. I understand nothing." He cries "Libera, free me!" and faints.

He wakes in a camp as silent as a winter grave. All his life, it seems to him, has been a mystery. All that once seemed secure now seems but past mystery antecedent to present mystery.

As he sits helpless, knowing nothing, in the presence of total mystery, of a sudden a light but powerful grip seizes his chin from behind and a finger skates over his teeth to find the chipped tooth that marks him as Libera's. And a Voice says: "In truth, I do believe that you are marked as Mine, though I had doubted it."

And in Libera's light and in Libera's time, Haldane must confront the Goddess. Her body is a woman's body, but the hair on his neck prickles at Her hideous aspect.

She says to him, "Come ride My horse until you sleep and I will judge you. Come horsie, come, give infant Giles a lullaby ride."

Haldane cowers before Her, unable even to deny that he is Giles. Libera's steed comes ambling slowly from behind him. It is the wurox. Libera sets him on the giant creature's back and says: "You must ride around my old standing stone like thread around a spool."

Haldane protests that he cannot ride even so far as the stone.

"You must ride so far," She says, "if you would be my Lover."

He surrenders to the moment and is tossed lightly on the broad back of the white wurox as though he were a feather juggled on a coverlet. Then Libera says: "You are not yet ripe. You are not yet the man to ride alone around my standing stone. But still you shall ride. I will ride with you."

Together they ride where time is forgotten. She says: "You will not be My Lover until you deny the Gets. You will not be ripe until you deny Morca. You will not be Giles until you deny Haldane."

And sleepily he says, "But you know I cannot do that, Mother. I am Haldane."

Haldane wakes to find himself at Little Nail. He is himself once again. His head



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wound is a healed scar. With him is Oliver—not Sailor Noll, but the Oliver he knows.

Haldane calls and blows his horn before the gate of his mother's father, Arngrim. And in time, the gate is unbarred.

It swings open. Standing before them is Arngrim and standing with him is Ivor Fish-eye, he who betrayed Morca.

## PART III: ENGAGEMENT

### 16

ON A MORNING that was bright, cool and still as a clear teardrop of dew on a spider's web. On a hill that was higher and safer than Morca's.

Below, the pattern of land was as deliberately made as writing on the page of a book. And one pair of eyes could see the pattern again as they had seen it when very young, but not since.

The wind did not blow. It honored the moment.

Four men stood, two within the open gate of a dun, and two without.

It was a tableau vivant: Haldane, dressed in bridegroom finery, stood poised with his horn, which was his from Arngrim's own hand. Oliver held his pipe as though by and by to knock it against his palm, but not for now. Arngrim—who was like a silvered sword, or a falcon, or an ugly tall monkey with large nose and eyes deep set in circles within circles—displayed no expression. Ivor, a fixed half-smile on his face, peeped around the corner of his dead eye.

When this frozen moment ended, things were not the same as they had been before. What happened was suddenly begun, suddenly over and of no import in itself. That is, Ivor spoke, Haldane passed his horn from his left hand to his right, drew Marthe's black dagger, then rushed at Ivor to kill him. Arngrim, that tall powerful private old man who seemed to understand all there was to be understood, struck Haldane a terrible efficient blow that knocked him to the ground just within the gates of the dun. Then he spoke words to Haldane, and all went within to breakfast.

Nothing was changed. But after this moment all was changed in Haldane's mind. Here is the outside and the inside of it:

Ivor unfroze his smile and spoke. "Now, so soon, we begin," he said. "It is no matter now when Romund arrives with the pig."

Oliver thoughtfully tapped his pipe out on his palm. He coughed rackingly—the expectable outcome of the weight of spells he had carried so far. The cough seemed dry and forced, and more racking therefore.

Haldane hated Ivor fiercely as he who had broken the old warm secure world, the island fortress in the Sea of Nestor, the safe near horizon. The dun of Black Morca had been a glowing gem, precious and enclosing, now shattered by men like Ivor with no concept of its value.

He pulled the thin knife with the fine black handle and rushed at Ivor with determination to kill him. While Haldane was striving to rise from the ground, Arngrim picked up the fallen knife, cleansed it of spring dirt with a finger, and made it something to keep.

Then he said to Haldane, "By the horn you hold, and have, it seems, learned to blow, I take you to be my daughter Freda's son," he said. "If this be your main method, you will soon be dead."



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Haldane nodded his head once to indicate the truth of these words. For in this moment, he realized that he must be different than he had been.

The old world was truly shattered. The jewel could not be mended. He was at sea, and he was bound to swim for his life in this shocking and promising universe, so vast and incredible—this universe in which everything was always new.

Later, after they had eaten, but before they fled the dun on Little Nail, Haldane said to Oliver, to indicate what he now knew: "It is exciting and fearsome, both, to be out here where everything is always changing."

Oliver tested his cough and then said, "That's what life is like. One thing after another. It is something you can forget when you are near a man like Morca who holds the world still."

But in this moment before breakfast, when Haldane was on his knees before Arngrim, Haldane did know clearly and finally where he was for the first time since the death of Morca.

He was at home in the unknown.

He was no longer lost in the unknown.

It was a great difference.

Arngrim said, "Breakfast waits. You must surely be hungry after your long journey."

As they went in for breakfast, Haldane's heart turned over at the very thought of not being a Get any more. Joyous uncertainty, exciting and fearsome. But the day was still clear and cool and sustaining, and when he looked one last time through the open gate at the message writ for him on the land, the design in the tapestry was still there like a key.

A Gettish woman, wholly unlike the Nestorian serving-women Haldane was used to, served their meal. He was taken with her braids. He allowed himself to look at her twice when to do so meant glancing away from Arngrim and Ivor. But he felt reckless.

That recklessness was still with him when he and Oliver were alone. That was in the moment before Ivor burst upon them to kill them for his own reasons.

Haldane said, "How is that cough of yours, Oliver? How are your pains?"

"I am . . . not so ill as I might be. Ill, though, mind you. What demands would you make on me?"

"We must be gone from here. There is no one in Nestor to trust. You must lead me to Palsance."

"And how are we to leave? We are in the grip of hosts and their hospitality is strong."

"We must use your magic," Haldane said.

"How can you ask that?" Oliver said. He coughed. "I can only bear so much."

"A small spell only. You once instructed me in such a spell—the Pall of Darkness. Do you remember? Cast a net of invisibility like that over us, and we will leave this place."

Haldane was very sure of his words, and delighted to be in the new universe where the stuff of education, like spells, might be applied to make newness.

Oliver said, "No, my young friend." He patted his chest. "Lend me a hand with your strength. Remember your studies with me and cast the Pall of Darkness for us."

"I would if I could," said Haldane. "But since I was granted justice by my father, I cannot . . ." and he gestured to show that memory and voice must



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fail him whenever he approached the spell. "You must suffer another spell for us, and I will supply our strength."

"Do you swear that?" asked Oliver.

"I swear it," said Haldane.

That was when Ivor burst upon them.

Throughout the meal, Ivor had played them with his eye, enjoying his power. He had talked of the art of tracking with pigs, of which he was evident master. Arngrim had not interrupted him, but let him speak. Haldane and Oliver had made no comment.

Ivor talked of great hunting boars that killed redly.

Ivor talked of pigs set to hunt their masters.

Ivor talked of hunting.

Ivor talked of the minds and tricks of those who trailed and those who were trailed.

Ivor talked of his great ability to kill.

Then Haldane looked from the door closing behind the woman who had served them, and said to Ivor: "But I do not recall that you killed the wurox for which you hunted so long. Perhaps the quarry must be large enough for you to see."

"The wurox does not exist," said Ivor. "That I may tell you. It is but a peasant jest. If it had existed, your father would have eaten it for his last meal."

"You have overstepped yourself," said Arngrim.

"Your pardon, Lord Arngrim. I was in error. I will talk of hunting."

"Some other subject yet, Baron."

"I be confused," said Ivor, and hid behind his eye. When he came out, he said, "Let us talk of the meal. This is very good. Do you smoke your own meat, my lord?"

"Yes."

"When my friend Romund arrives, I'll have a small pig for your butcher. I'll return in the fall for a taste of the bacon."

And he smiled as though he had, at great risk and daring, won through to a prize. Ivor was a triumphant man.

As Ivor entered that brown room where they were with its well-carved furniture stolen before Arngrim was born, Haldane was swearing to lend his strength to Oliver. Ivor had his sword drawn.

Ivor paused but a brief moment to let them know who he was and why he had come. Then he proposed to kill them swiftly. He crossed the small dais.

Haldane did what he had never done before. He struck a new blow, made of nothing he had ever learned, filled with power, while Ivor was stumbling over Oliver's bag. The bag was suddenly there as Ivor stepped on a stair. And Haldane as suddenly struck Ivor a blow much crueler than that which Haldane had had from Arngrim. The sword clattered on stone. Ivor went wandering in night realms.

Oliver could only look on in surprise at this swift passage. Violence had always held the potential of surprise for him.

Haldane turned with the sword recovered in his hand and saw Ivor helpless.

"He would not have killed you," said Arngrim from the doorway, "for you are my daughter's son, and I would not have let him. But neither will I let you kill him, for you are the son of Black Morca and good men have seen him rightly dead, as I have report. I will not let you be killed here, but I will not let you stay here. Therefore, you must be gone. And with you, this foul wizard of



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Morca's. If Morca had not bargained for advantage with witches in the forest and given refuge to this man, then he might still be alive at this moment. I would have let my voice be heard. But I do not like magic. And you, my daughter's son, smell of magic. You are like your father. You are not Gettish."

Arngrim stood waiting, sword in hand. Haldane did not look up at him, but rather at Ivor.

He said, "I must kill this man."

Arngrim said, "Bind him. He will not be found immediately. I've seen that your bellies are full. I will see you out the gate of the dun and three hours on your road. You must run for your lives."

So Haldane bound Ivor. He used the cord that he had from Rolf on the night of his betrothal. It occurred to Haldane to wonder how Princess Marthe fared in this universe where everything was new. He used the rawhide thong from his horn to bind Ivor's knees together. He gagged Ivor's mouth with a dried fish from the breakfast table that he had brought away to chew on.

"Leave the sword," said Arngrim. "You must rely on your magic, since you stand to die for it."

"I will leave the sword and I will rely on my magic," said Haldane. He stood before Arngrim who was still two steps above him on the dais. "I am not a Get, as you say. But you are my grandfather and I would lay eyes on you again. Take this from my hands."

He held out the horn which Arngrim had given him so long ago when his Mother was alive and they had come here to Little Nail. At the sight, Arngrim looked downward at his feet.

"Your rebuke is sharp," he said.

"It is no rebuke," Haldane said, and laughed strangely. "Take this horn from my hands and keep it close until I return here. Someday I will pay you a visit."

Arngrim shook his head at the irony as he took the horn from the hands of this only grandson whom he had condemned to die.

"Do you know the sound of this horn?" he asked.

"Yes," Haldane said. "I do know the sound of this horn."

"When your chief hunter is unbound, he will blow his hunting calls on this horn. I will see that this horn is buried with you."

"That would be honor," said Haldane. "I wish that I had given the horn to you as a rebuke. But I am not a Get now. If the huntsman returns the horn, then keep it close until I come again."

"I will escort you to the gate," said Arngrim.

"There is no need," said Haldane. "We will find our own exits with our magic power."

"Not here," said Arngrim. "Not here."

But Haldane made signal to Oliver to draw the Pall of Darkness over them. That was not a necessary act, and Oliver should have known so. But perhaps because Haldane had sworn to him to lend him strength and he had believed him, or perhaps because he was still upset by the violence and wanted to match its surprise with surprise of his own—for some reason Oliver did obey, cast his spell, and they became invisible before Arngrim and walked out of the dun on Little Nail unseen.

The trail down from Little Nail to the Pellardy Road was tortuous and



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difficult. Before they reached the bottom of the hill, they encounterd a man on horseback riding up.

Mortal eyes might not see them, so Haldane and Oliver did not hide. They but stood to the side to let the rider pass.

He was one they recognized. His name was Coughing Romund and he was a baron who had not liked Morca, for he was chief among the Farthing and could not like he who was chief among the Deldring. His face was narrow and he had cheekbones sharp as axes. A gaunt man, but his lean limbs were powerful. He wore shellacked leather armor.

His horse climbed at a steady pace. As it climbed, Romund coughed insistently.

Before Romund on the saddle was a black pig. Haldane knew it. It was Slut, that he was used to hunt with. As the rider passed, the little black pig raised its nose and sniffed the air urgently. Then it squealed and wriggled to be free.

Romund held it in place, but to do that he must pull his horse to a halt. Haldane and Oliver ran down the trail, for they knew that the pig smelled their presence.

At the first bend, Haldane turned to cast a last look behind. He slipped then, and landed on his behind. But he looked back to see Romund setting the pig down. It squealed and looked about uncertainly, and then Haldane was down the trail in a new surprise of rock. And Slut was left somewhere behind them.

17

THEY DID NOT hear the horn that day. They ran along the Pellardy Road until the Pall of Darkness failed. Then they were themselves.

Oliver was an old wizard, sadly out of breath. He carried his sack. Things from it had been left behind and the sack was lighter than it had been at other times. Oliver wore magenta satinet and could be seen at a distance. He felt himself conspicuous.

Haldane had only his bridegroom clothes, which had once been new and fine Gettish clothes, but were not new anymore. He had no weapons. His pockets were empty. All that he had which was especially his was a boar's tooth with Deldring markings that Morca had encouraged him to wear to remember the boar, and Deldring, and other things.

"We cannot stay here on the road," said Oliver. "We will be seen. But if we hide, they will find us. They will put that little pig on our trail. You heard what Ivor said of trails and hunts. What are we to do?"

Haldane said, "We will go inside the country. We will not follow the roads, but we will go by other ways."

"What other ways?" asked Oliver.

"The ways in the country."

"I do not know what you mean."

"There," said Haldane, and pointed to nothing in the land. "Don't you see the path?"

"No," said Oliver. "But we cannot stay here on the road. If you see a path, lead us on it."

Haldane led the way. They left the road, brushed through brown grass and then were on a way that Haldane could see and Oliver could not. Oliver followed where Haldane walked, and he did not suffer as much as he had anticipated from his spell compounded,



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his Pall of Darkness.

There were some signs by which Oliver could see that a way did exist. At times they walked in forest galleries, places that only now seemed made. Sometimes they walked in lanes between fields. Three times they passed by standing stones like that in the camp of Duke Girard. Once they came to a ring of stones.

But Oliver did not know how the way was found. He could not see how Haldane knew when to walk here and when to walk there, nor how he found the confidence that the way would be here when he walked here and there when he walked there.

They stopped to rest at the ring of stones.

"I wonder if three hours have passed?" said Oliver. "No matter. There are Gets all over this countryside, everywhere between here and the Trenoth. So Mainard, the friend of Duke Girard, said. We are in grave straits."

Oliver coughed, a dry cough. He forced it again.

"Did you see that I forbore to cough when Romund coughed? Not even a clearing of my throat. I think that was well-done. If we had not been invisible, we might have met Coughing Romund and been killed."

But after a minute, Haldane said, "If we had not been invisible, we might not have met Coughing Romund."

A bird sang intensely nearby. The sun was pleasantly warm on them.

"Everything is always so new!" Haldane said, marveling. "Do you sense what it is like . . . *now*." He pounced on the moment and missed, and smiled at the fun in his folly.

Then Haldane said, "What was that that I said?"

"I don't know," said Oliver. "What did you say?"

"It seems to me now that it was important," said Haldane.

Oliver felt obliged to say something important then. He said, "I will tell you this," he said. "We may be better off going this way than by the roads, but unless we change these clothes we wear, we will not be safe. If anyone sees us, we will have no chance to lie about ourselves."

"No. That was not the important thing I thought I said."

Soon Haldane led the way again. The country spoke to him and he listened to it. The way was open to him.

It was as though it was this way:

Once upon a time, men had taken a large landscape and remade it into a mirror.

Or, once men had made the western world into an engine, aligning the land so that power was gathered and loosed.

Or, once men had taken mountains and moved them, had put land in place and taken it away, so that a country that in a later day would make an empire was but a map of a greater world, copied in miniature. Alterations so immense that the play of children might destroy villages and let bridges tumble but never disturb the great meaningful permanence.

The land of Nestor—and who knew how much more?—was a pattern, a written book. It was a fabrication beyond the mind of a Get to admit possible, even to notice.

Haldane did not know the meaning of the writing. But he knew that it existed and he could follow it with his feet. Inside the land. Not the roads and the places where men now gathered.



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He laughed. He said, "Children. It's all so large. I hadn't thought it would be so large."

But he could not explain what he sensed to Oliver. It was as sealed as the spell he had once known and could not now utter. He didn't know the words. He could only lead the way across the countryside by routes that were not the routes of Gets or peasants or outlaws.

For instance, he said, "Was Little Nail made? Were all the hills made?" And Oliver could only shrug, gesture and cough. There were no answers in Oliver.

But Haldane did not doubt what he could now see madeness everywhere in the land. He could see his way markers and the path was not hard.

Haldane led the way by paths along water, through marks in distant vantages, in forest cathedrals. The day was timeless and golden. They met no one. They saw wildlife, and groups of birds flew overhead. Twice they heard voices calling or crying, but they saw no one and hurried on. They were in a country unknown to any but them. To Haldane it was constant surprise, the constant revelation of existence.

Oliver said, "They will have put your small pig on our trail. They must now be after us."

"Can you keep the pace?" asked Haldane.

". . . Yes," Oliver said in wonder. "I know not the source of my strength, but I can keep this pace. I do not yet feel the full weight of the Pall of Darkness."

And in the course of the day, these two walked farther together than they ever had any other day. It was a fine day for walking. Everything was large and old and part of itself here where they walked and neither Haldane, nor Oliver for all his travels' had been inside the country before. They had lived on high made places, and ridden in long made places, and swum in soft made places and eaten their picnics in the shade of hard made places—but they had not been inside the country before.

One could be inside the country and never be seen. But Oliver was only inside the country as much as he followed Haldane. His feet stepped where Haldane's feet stepped, and found a safe and easy way. But Oliver felt conspicuous. He was sure that he could be seen, that his magenta satinet was an unnatural display in this wilderness they walked and would surely be seen. He fretted. He had worn red wool in Morca's Dun, and on great occasions magenta, but when he had fled from Palsance to find Morca, he had worn gray so that he might not call attention to himself.

They stopped at dusk. In late evenglow they shared a dried fish, which was good.

Oliver said, "Do you remember the manner of our arrival at Arngrim's Dun?"

"Yes," said Haldane.

"As we labored the slope in the last of night, we were passed on the trail by a greasy Nestorian. He saw in us two like himself."

"Most like he did," said Haldane.

"He would not have if we had been dressed then as we are now."

"Most like that is true."

"I cannot disguise us again as I did before. I cannot chance another spell. We must buy, take or make peasant clothes. We must be Nestorians without the aid of spells. We must lie and pass for peasants."

Oliver coughed to show that he



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should not imperil his health with yet another spell, that he was rationally fearful. He was so rational in his argument that Haldane could not face him but must agree to Oliver's fears and scheme with him how to disguise them as Nestorians.

"All right," said Haldane. "If we see a place along our way where we may disguise ourselves, we will turn."

"Good, let us turn when we rise," said Oliver. "Before we stopped, I saw smoke rising against the late green of the southern sky like ink in water."

"I don't think the way is south," Haldane said.

"It is not far. It is but over the next hill or so. We will go there in the morning and steal clothes to disguise ourselves and then we will come back here."

"I would rather press on directly," said Haldane.

"If there is one thing I know," said Oliver, "it is that haste ends many men's lives. I have seen it to happen. We will rest easier and travel faster when we know that no one will recognize us. You said you would give me aid." He coughed to show Haldane's responsibility for him. "Give to me then that aid you promised."

"I will aid you," said Haldane. He lay back in the nest of cool grass he had made for himself. He drank in the evening. But it was not filling. It refused him.

Sometime later, Haldane said, "What was that?"

"What do you mean?"

"I thought I heard a horn sound just as the gloom finally darkened."

Oliver said, "I did not hear."

## 18

WHEN THEY AWOKE in the morning, the day was uncertain, neither one thing or another. The skies were thin and gray. The trees around them huddled close.

Oliver said, "We must go over this intervening hill. I think we will see the source of smoke then."

They left the path and struck out overland against the grain of the country. The climbing was not difficult, but it was a constant strain. They must lean, or they must bend, or they must clamber. Oliver was feeling wearied before they reached the top of the hill, and his cough was more fluid and less forced, but no less severe.

At the crest of the hill, they stopped. There was a higher crest, hidden from below, still looming above them. And they could see where they had started down on the path.

"Let us climb on," said Oliver.

"When you have caught your breath."

"Let us not wait that long."

This hill was more steep. To climb it took thought and time. When they reached the top of this hill, there was brush and they must push through it.

When they came into the clear, they could see that though the day had worn on, it was not different. It played at smiling and frowning, Jan, the sun, peeping through distantly. There was no source of smoke, no house or cabin.

"Oh, I think I see," said Oliver. "From the direction we came last night, the place we seek would be beyond this lower hill before us, not here. We must go on."



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But his cough was much graver. He shook off Haldane's hand and strode down the hillside. "You see. The slope is easier here."

In time they came beyond the farther lower hill. As they looked over into a little glen, Jan shown brightly so that all was clear in the narrow valley. And they saw there a small house in the woods, a Nestorian house something like the one where they had eaten clams. It stood alone in the silent morning, caught in the spear of the sun.

They were not in sunlight where they watched.

Oliver suddenly sat down. "You must go," he said. "I now feel very ill. I will wait here for you."

"What if I do not find what I seek? What do I say to gain aid? What do I use for payment?"

"Approach the house naked. Approach silently. See what opportunities there are to steal clothes. If you are seen, ask them to clothe you, because you are naked."

"I will do it," said Haldane.

Haldane stripped his clothes off his back. He took off his boots so that he was barefoot. All that he wore was his boar's tooth.

Then he set off to find the hut they had seen. His bare feet were cold and he had to watch carefully where he stepped. He made his way cautiously so as to approach the little house unseen and unheard. With so much care, he spent a long time reaching a place from which he could see all.

He looked up at the hillside, which was now in sun, then not. He could not see Oliver hid there.

There was no sun here in the little valley. The day was drear again.

The house sat silent the throw of a stone distant. It was a square little house. Its roof was shake instead of thatch. It had windows of glass like eyes, and it seemed to brood and watch Haldane as he crouched.

Behind the house, a frayed rope was stretched between two trees. Thrown over the line, as though forgot, were two gray smocks.

Haldane had not thought to hope for such a thing. His heart was seized at the sight of the two smocks drying in the wind.

He cast a look at the house, but he could see nobody. He crawled on hands and knees over the cold spring ground. He sheltered by the chimney of the little house and then he ran to the line and took the smocks. In a brief fit of nonsense, he matched the smocks and took the longer and put it on. It fit as well as most smocks on most peasants. But it was clean, and in the undecided weather of a late morning he stood and smelled the freshness of the cloth while his hair was teased by the ruffling hand of the wind.

He could not stand not to know, so he ran with the other smock trailing behind from his hand and looked through the window of the house. He could see no one inside.

Haldane rubbed at the window and looked to see better. The house was empty. But Haldane could tell by the angle of the light that came through the farther windows and made a sharp splash on the floor that it was summer within the house. The light he saw said that it was very hot and that the house was a pleasant refuge from the sun.



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Haldane saw dust motes swimming in the bright sun. On a table within the house, there was an earthenware pitcher and beside it there were two jacks. The pitcher was somehow so cold that it sweated.

Haldane felt thirsty from the brilliance of the sun, the heat that had dried his throat. He looked from the window to find a door so that he might drink from the pitcher. But when he looked, it was Bud-Month again. It was cool and windy, and Jan played rare tricks with the great clouds. There was no sun now.

He ran from the house, feeling its windows like eyes on his back. He did not want to linger here. He feared the return of the unknown owner of this place. His throat was still dry, but he no longer craved to drink from the pitcher.

He scrambled up the slope, the second gray smock over his shoulder. His bare feet slipped and scrabbled in the leaves and loose brown mold. He hurt the outside edge of his left foot stepping on a weathering branch stub hidden among the leaves so that there was small blood and he was limping when he came to Oliver.

He threw the gray smock down. "There is your smock," he said. "You may be a peasant now."

Oliver was sick. When he did not cough, he was aswim in nausea and weakness. It seemed that the climb they had made had brought on sevenfold the effects of the spell that Oliver had ignored as they walked yesterday.

"You have done well," Oliver said at last. He slowly took off his magenta satinet, sweating and shivering in the coolness of the day. "How did you deal with those at the house?"

Haldane sat to put his boots on once again. "No," said Oliver. "If we are to be peasants, we must be peasants. We must go barefoot."

And lay wracked with the sick swirl of his innards.

Haldane said, "The house was empty."

He looked at the cut on his foot, small, bloody and dirty.

"You must bear the pain as though you were a Get," said Oliver. For Gets do have virtues—they bear pain bravely.

The gray smock did not fit Oliver well, but it did fit him as it might fit a Nestorian.

"Do I make a peasant?" Oliver asked.

They were slow in ascending the slope that had seemed easy when they had come down it. Haldane had to aid Oliver when his sickness was upon him.

"It was as well that we stole these clothes," said Oliver. "The longer we are in Nestor, the more need we have of disguise. As I am feeling now, we will be a long time in Nestor."

They had to push through the brush again, and only at last came to the farther side of the great hill.

"The path is just below," said Haldane. "It is but two courses down the hillside."

But Oliver was not encouraged by these words. He stopped to rest and be sick. He vomited there in the leaves. It was conspicuous, but less conspicuous than magenta satinet.

"I will go spy our way," said Haldane.

He made his way down the slope. Before him was the last smaller hill hiding the path. As he came to its crest and a view of the way they had come yesterday, there was sudden wringle-



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jingle in the forest. He fell to the ground and peeped to see the riders.

First he saw a small black pig. It scented briskly and then trotted eagerly the last distance to where they had made their camp.

Behind the pig came three riders riding. The first of these was Ivor Fish-eye, casting close behind the pig, alert for the dodges of those who would flee him. Behind Ivor was Coughing Romund. He leaned on his saddle and cleared his throat. And third was another rider like a spear. When the pig found the camp, this one lifted a horn to his lips and blew.

He blew, *They were here, they were here.* It was the call of a hunter of men, not of game.

The call was none that Haldane had ever blown. And it was not Haldane who blew this horn. But he knew the tone of this horn as his fingers knew the texture of his graven boar's tooth. It was the horn that had been his, now in the hands of his hunters.

Slut whuffled and peered dimly.

Haldane slipped back out of sight of the camp and the path. He tumbled over his feet as the horn sounded again, out of sight behind his shoulder.

Then he climbed the hill faster than before. He did not mind what happened to his feet, hurt them, and ignored the hurt.

He came upon Oliver standing and gazing urgently down the hill. Oliver's disguise was successful. He was the very image of a sick and unhappy peasant.

Oliver said, "Did you see who blew the horn?"

"I did see. I saw that and more. There was the pig, Slut. And behind the pig there were three riders. There was Ivor Fish-eye, and there was Coughing Romund, and sounding the horn as they came was Iron Arngrim."

"Where did you see them? How close do they press us?"

"They are not far. They dismout now in our camp of last night. We cannot return now to our path. We must go otherwise."

Oliver said, "Let us go along the hill here. You shall confuse our trail as we go to slow pursuit. Then, when we can, we may find your easier path."

This was bravery for Oliver to offer. Here he was, sick and continuing sick. The country that lay before them to the west was cross-grained and difficult. Yet one of Oliver's virtures was perseverance, his dogged ability to continue. So they worked west and south, and west and north, and west and east and west, running when they could, sometimes crawling or climbing. They turned on their trail. They walked in water. They went where a horse might not go. They went where a pig might go only with great difficulty and left the trail there where a pig could not.

They did not hear the horn blow. They labored in fear of its sound. And though Haldane saw many signs that the country here was made, he saw no way inside the country.

Oliver lay in a hollow of grass. His legs were pulled tight and he rocked and nursed his side. Haldane came dashing in to earth beside him like a field rabbit to its hole.

Haldane said, "I emptied your yellow smoking mixture on the false trail. I pity the pig that finds it."

He tumbled over to take heaving breaths. He watched the clouds blow by in wisps and clots. The world he saw as



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he looked to the sky was silent. The air was so very quiet. One could stay still and nothing would be new but the changing clouds and the brooding and flighting of his heart.

"How do you fare?" he asked Oliver.

"I can . . . continue."

"Let us continue then," Haldane said. "For if I am right, then I see a way before us into the country."

Oliver ran, holding his side. Haldane ran, carrying Oliver's bag.

"Here is the path. Follow me."

They ran down the path. The earth was cool and soothing to their burning, broken, bleeding feet.

But it was dark on the path. The clouds gathered close overhead, and the sun ceased to show itself.

"What was that?" said Haldane, as they two suddenly stopped.

"I think it was a man by that standing stone."

"Nay, I meant that which I heard behind us."

"I did not hear anything."

"Then listen." With looks from hiding at the man before them by the standing stone in their way, they looked away again at nothing and listened, hardly daring to pant.

"I do hear," said Oliver. "It is the horn. But that was not where we were."

"No," said Haldane. "It is on the path behind us."

"I cannot go farther," Oliver said. "You must leave me here to die from this one who waits or from Arngrim and Ivor."

"Nay, I swore I would help you and I must be honest. Who is this one ahead whom we must pass?"

"I make it to be a Get."

Haldane studied for what he could see through the trees that intervened. It was a Get standing like a bear with a bow and arrow set to his string.

"It is a Get, but I do not know him."

"What are we to do?"

Haldane said, "I will go forward and let him see me and I will see what he will say. It may be that I can open our way."

Oliver rested his head against a tree there where he sat. He could not seem to catch his breath. It was unpleasant to see him labor.

He said, "What if we are separated? I do not know the way."

Haldane said, "If we are separated, follow the path straight to the great hill."

"What hill is this?"

"We saw its rough presence to the west where we rested last."

"I cannot follow your path," Oliver said.

"But it is the straightest way."

"I cannot see it to follow. Let me have my map."

The horn sounded: *On the trail, on the trail.*

Oliver said, "It is here. Barrow Hill. It stands alone. I will follow my map and meet you there if we are parted."

So Haldane walked forward along the path to the standing stone. As he came close, the Get stepped forward to meet him.

"Where are you from, young boy? Where are you going?"

"I am returning from a visit to my mother who is ill."

Haldane was dressed after the manner of a simple peasant. There was nothing about him that was not simple, for all he wore was a gray smock. His feet were bare. He had nothing in his pockets. He had no pockets. He spoke with humility, as no Get might speak.



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He had nothing to fear.

The Get, who looked like a bear, said, "Come with me. I need your strength."

So Haldane followed behind him to the large standing stone. There the Get set his bow down and motioned Haldane to go before him.

"Add your weight to mine," he said. "I wish to overset this rock."

So Haldane joined him and together they put their shoulders to the rock and pushed against its hardness. They heaved and strained and only at last they paused for breath.

The Get said, "This land is mine and I will clear it as I like. This boulder must go. Push again."

Again, they pushed as though they were oxen, dumbly as oxen. But the rock resisted them without effort and remained as it was.

"If you but knew how to make the lift, we could have this rock up and out of the ground. You are not trying. All you peasants are alike. No, do not hide your laugh. Heave again with all your strength."

So Haldane bent himself to the cool rock, wondering how easily it had been set in place. Straining and red, he was a parody of the Get, as the Get was a parody of him. He could see his own sweat mirrored on the Get's brow.

"We aren't even holding our own," cried the Get. "Give it a turn."

And then suddenly, for one brief moment before it surprised them and then fell back, the tall boulder came alive in their hands and strained free of the ground. It was like touching the great beast of the sea in its questing aliveness.

But then the rock was seated as firmly as it had ever been, and no two men could dream to move it. The Get turned to Haldane and before he could make a protest, the bear man fingered the thong around his neck.

"Let me see what you wear. Let me know whose dog you are."

But Haldane pulled away. He would not have the Get see his tooth with the Deldring markings. He did not know any Get to trust with his final secrets.

Haldane seized the thong and pulled free. He ran into the forest. An arrow was loosed behind him and struck in a tree very near.

Haldane ran away into the forest. The Get ran after him, and thereby the way was made clear for Oliver to follow his map along the second straightest route to the solitary hill. For they were now separated and they must meet as they had agreed.

Haldane dodged as he could. He pulled the rawhide thong from around his neck. On the thong was a carved boar's tooth with the markings of Deldring, a clan that did not now exist.

Here is how it was for Haldane:

When he was safe with Morca, he had known who he was. He was Haldane, the Son of Black Morca. He was a Get. And in his heart he believed that he was special among Gets because he was Haldane, the One Son of Black Morca.

He had lived as these things when it was easy to live as these things—held safe by Morca, straining against Morca's horizons but not defying them. When at last he did defy limits, the world had changed and become always new.

Was he, Haldane, responsible for the Night of Slaughter? Or were there other wills at work, too? Was he to blame for Morca's death?



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He and Oliver had fled into a strange world where it was pain and confusion to be what he had been: Haldane the Get, Haldane the Son of Black Morca. The tighter that he held to these things, the worse the whirl, until at last he had lost himself at the feet of Duke Girard the Outlaw and Sailor Noll.

The Goddess in his dreams had told him that he need no longer be a Get, and set him down on Little Nail. She had shown him the key in the land. And after Haldane had seen Arngrim and Ivor together there was that strange moment when he had ceased to be a Get.

Since that time, he had not acted like a Get. He had been different than any Get.

The world had continued strange, both wonderful and frightening. He fit it better—he was not so fuddled—but not yet was he fully at home here—no matter what he had first leaped to think after he saw the key in the landscape.

He had ceased to be a Get, but he had not yet surrendered Haldane, the Son of Black Morca. He had continued to wear the boar's tooth. It did not mean Deldring to him. It meant Black Morca, me, us, my father, the father, the king, the tyrant, the rider, the mother-killer, the thief, the liar, the emperor, the sun, the universe, himself.

As he ran, Haldane swung the thong with the boar's tooth, and as he dodged away, he wrapped the thong with a neat throw around a tree limb above the eyes of those who might pass. And he ran into the forest, between trees, across a clear place.

The Get came into the clear place, lumbering straight, arrow nocked on string. He called Haldane to hold.

And Haldane, who knew somewhat of the skill of Get bowmen, held. The Get approached close and backed Haldane step by step to a tree. He fingered at Haldane's neck and found nothing there, then pulled the smock down to bare Haldane's shoulder.

The clouds gathered close overhead began to rumble.

"What is your name?" the Get asked.

"Giles," said Haldane.

"I don't believe that you are returning from a visit to your mother, Giles. I think you are a runaway. Since you wear no brand now, you shall wear my mark, Giles. How like you that, Giles?"

## 19

IT BEGAN TO RAIN in the late afternoon which was premature night. The back of the pen, this close-barred wooden cage, was less wet, so the three waiting to be branded crouched there in the dimness and waited.

There was a lost man, a warty-faced babe of middle years. He would say nothing but, "I am lost. Where am I? I am lost. If someone would explain, I would try to understand. But I am so lost."

There was a boy younger than Haldane. He said, "There is true freedom in being a serf. That is why I sought so long and skillfully to wear Lyulf's mark."

And there was Haldane.

It hardly seemed possible to Haldane that this was yet that same day. Since Oliver and he had set out this morning up the hill, this day had seemed like many days. As yesterday had also been many days.

It was long ago that he had given the horn back to Arngrim. Then he was not



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a Get. But he was still Black Morca's son. He had thought then that though he was not a Get, he would still overspread the West and seize it all, from South Cape to the Hook, from Orkay to Grelland. Chastain, Palsance and Vilicea. From Lake Lamorne to the sea. He would show them who he was. He would show them all who had been hurt!

One day he would meet Arngrim when he, Morca's son, had men at his back who followed him for choice. On that day, he would give Arngrim, who was the best of all Gets there were, the choice of becoming other than a Get, or dying than rather. That is why it seemed right that Arngrim should carry the horn and blow it rather than waiting for the empty-handed huntsman to bring the horn back to him.

For Haldane had no doubt that the son of Black Morca could pass safely into Palsance. He could grow great in strength there and return again to Nestor. He could build a maelstrom. He knew that he had the power.

He might not have run from the Get. He might not have thrown the boar's tooth away. He might have said, "Haldane, Son of Black Morca," to the Get instead of "Giles." If he had been fearless.

If he had been the son of Black Morca.

But he had not been fearless in the name of Morca.

Who was he? Whose dog was he? Whose name was he fearless in?

The Get came to the cage then and took the lost man away. While he was gone, the boy said, "I only wish I knew beforehand what it like to be branded."

Haldane did not want to be branded. He hated the thought. What Get could be branded and live? Arngrim, perhaps. But Black Morca, who was more than Arngrim, could not be branded and be Morca. And Haldane could not be branded and be the son of Black Morca. No man with a brand on his shoulder, and so marred, could be followed from choice by a maelstrom.

Haldane thought that he might escape when the Get should bring the lost man back and take away the boy. If he could but remember the spell that once he had learned from Oliver, the Pall of Darkness that Oliver had cast over them at Arngrim's. Then when the door was open, he might slip away unseen to find Oliver on Barrow Hill. He still might have his whirlwind and his empire.

It was his if he could think of the spell. And that should be possible. Sometimes as he had hunted in the afternoon, when he was drowsy, the words would come back to him and he would almost be invisible. He should be able to recall now when it was of moment to remember.

But the spell would not reveal itself to him no matter how he strove to approach it. It hid from him. He coaxed. He laid in wait for it. He mumbled to it of Oliver and the way he used to teach. But the spell would not let itself be caught. The rain continued.

The door of the pen opened. The man returned, and the boy taken.

"Are you ready for my private mark?" Lyulf asked. "Boy, you are so young."

"I am ready to prove myself! Is your iron hot?"

Then the pen was closed after them. The lost man sat, his smock tight over his brand, as though he would not let Haldane see the mark. He did not



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speak, he did not babble as before. But he stared directly at Haldane with knowing eyes. He had a secret in his mind and he held it close and looked at Haldane. Haldane could not tell why. Did the man hold the secret so that Haldane might not have it? Or did he wish to tell the secret—if only Haldane could read faces as he could read this great arrangement of country that most men only knew as lice know kings, with intimate ignorance.

This place, this very place, he knew, was an old place, older than Haldane, or Morca, or the Gets, or the Empire of Nestria, or the long-ago Prince Jehannes who came of Bary. It was older than story.

Just so had it been here: A house. A stable and smithy. Even this pen. That had been here, too. Waiting for Haldane forever so that this moment might be. Heldane felt certain of that from signs.

But the man said nothing to Haldane, and flickered his eyes away when Haldane opened his mouth to speak, so that Haldane must say nothing. Then the man who had been lost stared at him again with his secret until the door opened.

It was the boy, unconscious. Haldane helped to carry him into the pen. But the Get then pulled Haldane away by the shoulder, jostling him, not allowing his feet firm purchase.

"Come along, Giles. You have hung back long enough. I must see what you are made of."

The rain dripped on Haldane's neck as they entered the stable. It was warm there from the heat of the animals. The air was pleasant with the smell of manure.

The building glowed with the light from the smithy fire. Shadows flickered on the wall. Haldane could hear the sound the animals made as they shifted place. He could hear the hiss of late afternoon rain in the thatch. He could hear the separate sound of the drizzle of the rain in the yard. And he could hear the drip from the eaves before the door.

This moment was immediate. All the world was gathered here in this building, expressing presence in the feel of the air, and the smell of the air, and the taste of the air, and the various sounds. The sag of two posts, one this way, one that. The mustiness of straw. That it was late afternoon was token that all rightness should be gathered in dark late afternoon.

Even the smell of burnt flesh that lingered was late afternoon, and now, and very much of this thisness.

The Get took Haldane into the smithy. Against the wall was a framework of wood and leather.

"Kneel down on that," said the Get. "Place yourself in yon mother's arms."

Haldane took his place on the frame. It held him comfortable but helpless, his arms around the wooden bar, his cheek laid against leather that was surprisingly cool. It made him think of the pitcher that sweated in the summer house.

The Get moved to his fire and Haldane could hear the sound of bellows working, the clank of metal, and at last the hiss of an iron being tested in water.

The Get came back to Haldane and without warning pulled his smock down so that his shoulder was naked to the air. Then he touched Haldane with cold wet fingers. Haldane waited for the sizzle of flesh, but it hardly hurt.

"It is a great test you are facing," the



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Get said to Haldane. "Have you strength to face it, boy? Or should I knock you insensible as I did the last one?"

"I know not," Haldane said. Into the leather he said, "I would flee you and not be branded." He spoke in Nestorian.

"But, Giles, you must be branded," said the Get in Gettish, and rumpled Haldane's hair fondly. "Hold your chief strength in mind, and leap with it when the iron strikes. Only then will you live."

Haldane could hear the even pace of a horse walking in the yard beyond the sounds of rain. The Get ceased to rattle his ironware. He walked to the door. There was silence then.

Haldane lay helpless in the arms of the kneeler. He might struggle to his feet. He might strive to break the machine with the strength of his arms. Or he might lie as he was and be branded.

Then Haldane heard the sound of a cough, deep, rough and gaunt. Was it asking a question?

The Get said, "Is your nose stopped? Branding serfs."

The cough again.

"And why should I answer the questions of one like you, Romund, who was never a friend of my clan?"

The cough, scratched and hoarse, said: "Because Black Morca is dead and you Deldrings have no friends, Lyulf."

"Is Morca dead, then? And who could kill a man who was as much as Morca? Tell me that."

"Many men might have killed Morca, but it was I, and Egil Two-Fist, and Ivor Fish-eye, and others!"

There was the sound of force against force, the panting of breath, and then a rattle and thump.

Romund said, "I will stand inside. I have been in the saddle from one Libera's Day to the next, and from that one to this. I have been eight days on the trail of the cub of dead Morca to see him dead, too, much of that in rain. I will stand where it is dry until it is time for me to leave. Shall I kill you, Lyulf?"

"Carry your quarrels elsewhere than me," the Get said.

"But you are a Deldring, and you are loyal to your Deldring master—Morca, sprung of Deldring Garmund."

"Who says this is cause to fight?"

"I say it. I, Romund, who am Farthing. What say you, Deldring?"

"I say, yes, that I am a Deldring. And if the son of Black Morca should come to me, then I would aid him as I could against you—and all Farthings. But I have not seen him. So ride on, Romund." There was a clank of iron. "Ride on, unless you would fight."

"Nay," said Romund. "I will not try to kill you now. I would not wear your brand by accident, Lyulf. Men would not understand. When you are armed with other weapons, we will meet again. Mayhap we will meet at the Storthing."

There was the sound of one moving sideways in the straw.

"Who is this?" Romund asked, and touched Haldane's bare shoulder with a hand like dry nettles or snakebite.

"It is a serf I brand as my own. Do not stand between us or you may wear his mark."

"No, I will not. I will go back to my divided trail. I will hunt Morca's Get until that boy is dead. I will hold night and day to his trail in my slow steadiness and the son of Morca will be as nothing as your old dreams of



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Morca who was, and now is not."

There was silence. Haldane could not hear the Get Lyulf. There was rain. There was dancing shadowplay. There were the warm animals in the darkness of the stable.

Then he heard the horse move slowly on through the yard. At last gone. At last only the sound of rain again.

Haldane lay cradled in the arms of the kneeler, trying to recall his chief strength.

Lyulf worked at his fire.

Haldane smelled hot metal.

Fingers fumbled at his neck and his heart was suspended. His shoulder was gripped. And then something so cold that it penetrated his entire being, bowled his heart over like a swollen stream after the early melt of winter, the opposite of expectation, the pain of pains that cracked him apart, the great cold burning of flesh, *that* touched Haldane.

He must ride the kneeler as helpless as the great white back of the wurox. He floated in that which passed his understanding.

He was now no son of Black Morca. Who would believe that he was? Morca's Son could not wear the private mark of a Get burnt in his flesh. The choice had been his. When Lyulf had approached with his iron, he might still have announced himself Haldane, the son of Black Morca. And if he had, the maelstrom and the empire would have been his. But he had passed that binding and loosing by.

He could not live Morca's dreams. He was a branded man, and the one who would live Morca's dreams would not wear the private mark of anyone burnt in his flesh.

He was someone else.



HALDANE SAT in the darkness of the pen. The rain had stopped and the early night was fresh-made. The air was cold. The clouds were broken. Haldane's shoulder throbbed as though it were a warm heart at labor. Haldane's shoulder throbbed as he thought.

He thought on his chief strength:

He could suck a teat, and crawl. These were strengths. He could hold his shit like a man. He could walk. He could run. He could ride. He could read. He knew all there was to raiding save for a raid, which was a small difference. He could lead men. He could lead men thus far only to death. But there were other things that he could do, too: Many things. Many strengths were his.

But, since yestermorn, he could see keys in the very shape of the land, and ways within the country. Next to this his other strengths were all as nothing. This was a great gift to him that he did not deserve, a gratuity, a lifting of the Veil of the Most Precious. He could not say why it should have happened. He could only feel small before that for which the land was made—that unknown. And that by which the land was made—that unknown. These unknown things were much greater than the Gets or Morca or any strength he had from them.

It seemed to Haldane that if this cage he was in was the cage of a Get, the close prison of one who was a Deldring who followed Morca, that it should have no strength that was greater than his strength. For the unknowns that were the source of his strength were much greater than the Gets or Morca and any strength that they might have.



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So Haldane looked about him in the cage, and he saw there the door that was the way out. As Haldane had known even before, this place was an old place. There was a door in the pen. There had always been a door in the pen for those who could move in other ways as long as there had been a pen.

Before he was branded, Haldane had not seen the door. He had seen only those things that said that this place was an old place. It was as though the country were a book that none but he knew of, and in it he could read the letter "a". Before he was branded, Haldane had seen sign of the book, but nowhere a letter "a". So he was helpless.

Now he could see the door that left the cage through other ways. One more sign of the book was clear to him, if not all.

And so he left the pen.

He stood alone. Jana, the-moon, was rising, full and fat. The night was new. Haldane stood, bare feet spread, naked but for his smock, one who was stripped to nothing but his essential self, and tasted of the night's chill clarity.

Haldane thought then that he would make his way inside the land to Barrow Hill and there he would find Oliver, and together they would walk to Palsance. He would do this not because he was still the son of Black Morca, one who had need of a wizard, but because he had promised to help Oliver with his strength and it would wound his strength to break his promise.

And so he set out along the path, for there was a way into the land immediately thereby behind a bush. Feeling at one with himself, he followed this easy way, for it had been easier than he had ever expected to leave the place of the Get.

It was enough to make him laugh.

It was sprightly gay.

For he had shed great weight when he left Black Morca behind him. He had been paralyzed by Morca, and for that he had been branded. If it was not so, why was the way not open to him before he was branded? If not for Morca, could he not have thought of the Pall of Darkness, and left the cage?

His feet were light. Barefoot he sprang because of all that he no longer was.

It was to race beneath the moonlight, under the skying clouds.

It was to leap.

It was to merry springtime, ha-ha.

Hu-yah.

So it was that the boy went along the way to Barrow Hill through bright and flighty night, through calm chill under flying skies. All around him was infinitely alive, infinitely sensitive.

He had survived, and he had not thought he would. After all that had happened, he was still himself, and he rejoiced.

And then he began to notice the strangeness of the night.

The clouds ran wild across the sky, but the night was windless. The night air was cool, but it *was*, it did not stir about. He looked more and more to the skies as he walked.

Because his attention was in his eyes, he did not know when first the leaves in the trees about him began to shake and shiver. Now and then, the whispering rattle. The talk of leaves in wind.

But there was no wind. The night air was clear, and, but for the leaves, it was silent. It was so lucid that he could hear the throb of his shoulder in the silence.

He began to walk faster then, to leave



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the sound behind him.

The silent clouds hurtled overhead, and cast large shadows over the land.

The leaves clattered in the windlessness.

Was it before he began to run that the wind began to howl? Or did it first howl and the trees to lash about as he began to run?

But where he ran it was windless. The winds of the earth were loosed all about him and he could see their great force, and he could hear them like screaming birds, and waterfalls, and winter, but naught of it touched him.

The stormwind battered the land. It flung trees. It made his ears to ring as though great gongs had sounded but a moment before. But nothing of the wind touched the boy. He ran within the calm and silence of the night.

He ran toward Barrow Hill, which he saw before him, bald and alone.

As he came through the hills to the plain, light and shadow reeled beneath the moon.

Power circled around Haldane. It lashed at his heels.

He ran into the plain that lay before Barrow Hill. When he left the hills and set foot on the plain, clouds coasted over the face of the moon and all grew dark. In that darkness, the wind became silent and all was still. There was no howl. There was no clash of leaves. The clouds lay unmoving before the face of the moon.

In the middle of the plain, the boy came upon a standing stone. He was winded from running, so he paused to lean against the stone in the silence and in the darkness. He felt it a familiar thing, almost a place of safety.

He listened to the pulse in his shoulder, the pulse of his heart, the pulse of his breath, the pulse of the universe in his ears. And as he rested there against the stone, the moon suddenly shone again in its fullness, as though a hand had swept the clouds away. Then, before him, he saw the rough place, Barrow Hill, like a boulder alone in a wide field.

Then he turned and there saw three riders. One was in link that shimmered in the light. One was in lacquer that threw the moon back to the moon again. The third wore no armor but carried a golden horn and blew at the sight of Haldane.

And before the riders came a monstrous black pig. Lather from its jaws snowed the ground. Its breath was so hot as to alter the coolness of the night. Moonlight reflected from its tushes would wound sharply.

The snort of the pig was like the sucking out of his bones. The cries of the three riders were nightfears given tongue. The calling horn struck him like the cold wind at last.

It cried: *Here is the quarry. Gather for the kill. Here he is. Gather quickly. Kill. Kill.*

It was the wind he had not felt before, cutting lightly through his simple smock, cutting away skin, flesh and bone, flaying open the heart.

He ran and did not know why he was pursued. These men sought the Son of Black Morca and he was not that anymore. He had no army any more to match against Ivor Fish-eye. He was small and never would be large. He would never play Deldring to Romund's Farthing. What were Farthing and Deldring to one like him who wished only to melt into the land? He would never return with men at his back to make Arngrim no more a Get.



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He would swear to it.

He was nobody. And yet they pursued him through the night. They blew the horn after him. Why would they seek to kill him so hard, these three inexorables? Why was he the quarry? Why was he to be killed?

They came after him across the plain. The pig snorted and they cried halloa. *Ta-ta*, the horn, *ta-ta*.

All the Gets who hunted for Haldane through all the Gettish ways of Nestor were called to gather here as he, their victim, was brought to bay. They would dismember him and silver his red blood with moonlight. They would throw the pieces of his body into the abyss and turn their backs on it.

And the monster pig harried after him to have its own desire. It meant to drag his body away from the huntsmen and devour it in greedy secret as a sow sometimes consumed her own farrow. And it would befoul his carrion bones with dirt and filth as it fed.

He reached the base of Barrow Hill and began to climb. Up the rocks and through the scrub. And then he clambered. All among the boulders, around and over, up the hill he went in his bare feet.

He climbed without looking since there was nothing that he might do but climb. He lost himself in climbing, climbing to climb. Where they were behind him, he knew not. Who they were, how many they had now become—he did not look to know.

He knew they followed him. He knew there was no hope for him. He climbed because he could still climb.

He would show them who he was, what little was left of him. They must climb this hill his way and his way would be the hard way. Then only might they have him.

And all the while as the boy climbed, he could hear the great black creature-pig slavering behind him. It touched his heel hotly and he wore its spume on his smock.

He came at last to a place where there was no more to climb. Only one final great block of stone overhead. When he was there, that would be the place they would tear him down and kill him.

The pig was close, and then he left the pig behind well below at the base of the rock to find its own way to the top. As he climbed his chimney, the fetid black animal trotted back and forth looking for another route.

At the top of the rock there were several small trees and lichen growing on the rock face like a small landscape. The boy sat on the countries of lichen as though they were a carpet and looked at the many men scrambling up the rock hillside to be part of his death. He felt sorrow and infinite pity for them because they were only Gets when there were larger things to be than that.

The evil black pig squealed madly. It looked at him and knew him. It agonized at the rock.

In that instant, Haldane remembered the Pall of Darkness. It seemed to him that of course he must know it.

The one who could not remember the Pall of Darkness was the one who was son to Morca. He was not that one any more. He was not the son of Black Morca. Therefore, he could know the Pall of Darkness. Of course. Of course.

He knew the spell then. He remembered the words as though they were the Lineage of Wisolf. The gestures of hand were as familiar as those in training horses. It was all open to him.



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Also open to him was the memory of the Night of Slaughter, the night of his betrothal, the night of Morca's death. He remembered the Chaining of Wild Lightning, and Oliver's failure. He remembered all: fighting, death, sickness and blood, and he remembered the Pall of Darkness. Now much was clear to him.

And here he was now on Barrow Hill with the Pall of Darkness again on his lips. And where was Oliver?

He stood and called, "Oliver! Oliver! I am here. Where are you? Oliver!"

But Oliver did not answer Haldane.

The eager creature-pig squealed in triumph as it found its own way up the rock.

The horn blew just below. It said: *The game is up. The game is up.*

But it was not, for Haldane could still pull the Pall of Darkness down around his shoulders and steal away down Barrow Hill. No mortal eyes could see him. He could go away and continue to live as he was. He could be safe.

But for the pig! But for the black pig!

Haldane turned and looked away from the rock and over the moonlit country at his alternative. And before him, curving away, there was a stone bridge. It was clearly limned. Below it there was mist and voidness. The bridge was without foundation. Where the bridge led was lost to sight in the mist. He who fell from that bridge would be forever forgot.

Bridges may fall down, as all who know Nestor know.

The pig was upon him then, and he fell onto his knees before its power. It struck him with its heavy body and then it was past him. Haldane looked up and the pig grunted and trotted out onto the bridge as though it were substantial and might easily bear great weight. Haldane watched to see what the pig would do. It had lost all interest in him and it walked out farther and farther on the bridge that had no support. Haldane wanted to call to it.

He thought once more of the Pall of Darkness and looked out to see Arngrim, and Romund and Ivor. But he could not see them anywhere. Where had they gone? Where were the other Gets who had come from all Nestor? He could not see them around the base of the rock.

The mist circled the base of the rock now. Beneath it, there was great nothing. Haldane stood on the rock in the void that supported the bridge over the void. There was bright moonlight and there was mist clear as cloth.

Haldane looked to see the black pig. As he looked, the animal became a white wurōx and disappeared into the mist.

## 21

HALDANE STEPPED CAUTIOUSLY onto the bridge. The winds of the Void that had surged about him through the night now whistled like hollow desolation and waited below in the emptiness for him. Haldane tested the stone, but it bore his weight without wag or sag.

How strange, how very strange this all was. Since Morca's Banquet, all was always strange. It was a mystery and a delight and an awfulness how strange things had been. Those things that had befallen him were like nothing that had ever befallen him before.

What was this place? What was this bridge?

It was a causeway over the Abyss, resting on nothing, passing over the



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Void. How could such a bridge, hanging giddily, hang? It wound slightly, sometimes curving as though following the slope of emptiness. Everything that Haldane knew—his senses, his fears, his desire to survive—all these told him that the bridge was not to be trusted, even though the wurox might walk upon it.

But his chief strength, which was his new ability to find his way within the inner mysteries of the land, insisted that he walk forward boldly, that this was the true way.

And so he paused, torn between nightmare and dream.

He knew only this: that he was afoot in a universe that always changed. He was not in Morca's old world where all was safe and still until the world broke. He was in a universe that always moved and never broke.

The old unmoving world had broken that he might not break. But now, he might break, but he knew this new ever-changing world would not.

Was this nightmare? Was this a place he did not fit and could not fit? Was it always to be endless whirling confusion? Was it Libera, the hideous caterpillar creature, She Who lured, promised and lied, toying with him still as though he were a little spider made to run madly on a green grass stem?

Or was this the place that he dreamed of? That place where he was at home, even though all was always strange, because he was one with that great mysterious power which inhabited this country?

Before him, the wurox returned to stare silently out of the farthemess of the mist. Then it became vanished again in the white folds of gauze. Haldane followed where it had disappeared, stepping out onto the bridge.

The clouds were gone now from the sky. The moon shone clear. The night air was still and cold. Mist hung about the bridge in ribbon curtains.

Haldane walked firmly, one foot after another, each set down squarely on the supporting stone. In the Abyss, there were moans. Something awful lurked below. It was lonely and alone. It was that which was hacked to pieces and forgotten. It was that which was fouled in mud and devoured by sow. It was that which was dead. It howled and seethed to have Haldane. It tested itself against the bridge, pushing and scrabbling to tear it away.

Could this be the dream where he was more at home than with Morca because he was one with that which always changed? How could he be safe and not be broken and cast down? How could he be one with this? Morca's name was not enough that he should cease to fear. In whose name was he fearless, that he might live?

All that existed was himself, Haldane, alone, afraid. There was no wurox. There was himself and the causeway and the moon and the mist and the Thing waiting below. It was like Libera in its hideousness.

The Thing reached for him. It tore away small stones from the bridge and hurled them into the roiling turbulent nothing. It cried like oily black water in the Void. It meant to swallow him whole that he should be absorbed into it and be one with its awful, lonely, solitary power.

He had thought when he escaped from the Get, that he was safe. He might be branded. Morca's Son might be no more. But there was still Himself, Haldane, who was free and would sur-



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vive as he had always been. Haldane was that which was really real, which might find refuge for its self in some safe place in Palsance and there never be troubled again.

This Haldane was no Get who might not don other clothes and live. This Haldane was not Morca's Son, with his dreams of maelstrom, who might not be marked with another's private mark and live. This Haldane was that Haldane that was sure it would be Haldane in any clothes, in any condition of body, in any body, at any age, always. That which continued. That which cried.

Haldane cried in pain and hopelessness.

Haldane cried in fear his one last inadequate name of power.

Haldane cried, "Haldane!"

And the Void echoed "Haldane!" eagerly, as though now that it knew his true name it was hungrier than before to devour him. It would rip the meat from the name. It would gorge itself on his flesh, lick its lips, and leave him isolate and nameless on the place of lonely bones.

Before him, the bridge suddenly came to an end. It hung there unfinished, as though he had been brought so very far, through worlds on worlds, to this ultimate brink. As though this end had been made for Haldane.

This world—so always new! So nightmarish, but always hovering on the edge of dream.

There was a great echoing crash then as though thunder boulders dropped clashing into the Well of the Worlds. And then again. The stone bridge was collapsing section by section. Before the echo of one collapse had fairly rung, another section would fall, pulled after it into empty forever falling by the Thing of the drowning Void. The bridge fell away, and the mist swept after, so that the last remaining sections of the bridge stood alone under the moon, hanging in nothing. Their fallacy, curtained by the mist, was now clearly revealed and they could no longer hang unsupported, but must fall.

Again: a rumble like the hungry stomach of time, and the stone curve was gone—echo, echo, echo. There were but two sections of stone now remaining.

Haldane stood on the final coursings that the mason had set in place. Behind him, one more section of the bridge gave way. So little was left—no more than the stones he stood upon. The black waters of infinite loneliness and separation awaited him below.

He closed his eyes. In the darkness, he thought of one great security amid fear. A Name came to him. With the Name, he stepped forward, off the rock, into the Abyss, as the last stones of the bridge fell into the storm.

He was unsupported by himself or by anything that he had ever known. He stood on nothing. But he stood!

His eyes tight closed, he stepped and stepped again. And there, where he could not see, there was always something beneath his feet. Again, and again.

He did not fall. The winds of the Abyss cried in self-pity that he did not fall.

One step at a time he proceeded. Each step was different than the last. It might be hard and sure. It might be soft and uncertain. It might yield and sway. It might not even be there—so that he stepped and caught himself, heart swooping, on a stair below. But as he



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fell he did remember the Name, and lo, a stair was there beneath his foot.

That which was below his feet might be like rock; or like a bog, or like a grassy hillside, or like a tree trunk bobbing in water to tip and spin. It was this, it was that.

And then again, it was nothing! But always he remembered the Name. With the power of the Name he pulled his foot free from the bog that sucked at him. And a stair was there instead of the Abyss, which cried for him.

Then there was another stair, stair upon stair. Eyes tight closed, teeth set, he stepped away into uncertainty as though he walked Morca's Stair by night and was confident. And again and again, the next step was there, waiting or created, for his reaching foot.

Then a Voice suddenly said: "What do you do on My Staircase?"

His heart leaped and he ceased to step. His eyes were still tight shut.

He said, "This is my Stair. I found it, and I may follow it down."

"But these Steps that you have found are My Steps and not your Steps. There are Rules for those who walk My Steps. If ye would walk the Steps, ye must mind the Three Rules of the Stair."

"What be the Three Rules of the Stair?"

There was a sudden tug at his smock that threatened to over-balance him, so that he cried aloud.

The Voice said: "None may walk my Staircase who is not naked to himself. Are you naked?"

"I am not naked," he said. "The night is cold. All that I have in this world to keep my bones warm is this smock."

"Rule the First broken," the Voice said. "Smocks are expressly forbidden on My Staircase. No one may wear a smock here. You must leap from the Stair."

"Must I?" he asked. "I did not know the Rule. May I not take off the smock and cast it from me?"

There was a long silence. Then the Voice said, "Just this once, I will bend My Rule. You may take off the smock and cast it from you."

Eyes still shut, he pulled the smock over his head. He held it in one hand and threw it into the teeth of the Abyss. The mad Thing snatched at the tidbit, swallowed it whole, and whined for more. Cold air beat around his shanks.

"Rule the Second," said the Voice. "No one may close his eyes and walk My Steps. Are your eyes closed?"

"They are closed," he said. "If I ever open my eyes, I would surely fall."

"Rule the Second broken," the Voice said. "That cannot be. Now you must jump from the Stair. You cannot stay." The Thing howled at these words.

"What if I should open my eyes. May I stay on your Staircase then?"

"Bend another Rule?" the Voice asked. "Very well. I have bent one Rule. I will bend a second. But no more. You may open your eyes."

He opened his eyes then. He saw nothing before him. But he did not look at his feet. And his feet continued to stand on the stair that was in nothingness.

"Rule the Third," said the Voice. "All those that walk My Steps must have my special let-pass. Do you have my special let-pass?"

"Is a chipped tooth a let-pass?" he asked.

"No," said the Voice. "A chipped tooth a let-pass? Never such a thing."



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"Then I have no special let-pass."

"No special let-pass? Then Rule the Third is broken. And this one cannot be bent. And so we are at an end. At last. You cannot walk My Staircase. You must hurl yourself into That Which Waits."

That Which Waits swirled about and moaned to itself.

There was no help for him now. He was naked and alone. He was without power. He was helpless. He was nothing.

He was nothing but the Name in his heart. He stood on the stairstep over nothing. He breathed one last time, and then cried the Name aloud as he hurled himself into the Void. He was nothing. The Void was nothing.

All that was was the Name. The Name was all that was.

And the Name held him safe in Its arms.

The Voice, which was the Voice of Infinite Gentleness and Love, the Voice of Truth, said: "Who am I?"

He said, "Thou art that for which the country was made."

And the Voice asked again: "Who am I?"

He said, "Thou art that by which the country was made."

And yet again: "Who am I?"

"Thou art Thou. Thou art Libera."

And the Voice said: "Open your eyes."

His eyes were open for he had opened them on the stair.

He said, "But, Mother. My eyes are open."

"Open your eyes," She said.

And he opened his eyes. Before him there was radiance, which was light flooding the mind to fullness and overflowing.

The Voice said: "Thou art my Lover, Giles."

He who had been Haldane, but was now Giles—which was the name of the Lover of Libera—lost himself in Love of the Goddess. She was that One Who united All that was Lost and Scattered. Who was the Path. Who was the Home and the Dream. Who was the Always New. Who was the Pig. Who was the Wurox. Who was the Abyss, and Who was That which lies beyond the Abyss.

He Loved Her for a moment that was eternity. And She cradled him like mistress, like mother.

When it was time for him to leave Her and return to the world, She said: "There is yet More. There is always More."

He, Giles, said: "I would know More. I will know More."

She said: "If you would know More, then you must discover these answers: Why were you born? And for what purpose did I make this country? Study the questions well. When you bring these answers back to Me, then ye shall surely know More."

"I will," Giles said. "I will return."

"In time," the Voice said. There was a note of—was it compassion? Was it pity? "You will learn that it takes time. Go now with My Love and Blessing and meet your trial, for ye have trials to meet. Remember My Name."

## 22

On Stone Heath the menhirs, the great standing stones, stretch in rows across the moor that rises above the western bank of the Trenoth River, away from the river, eleven rows of stones in all. Like so many giants, they stand imprisoned, sunk to their knees,



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rank on rank, for a league—fully three miles. They are rough-hewn misshapen things, crudely made, with no art in them. Some are as tall as a tall man, some the height of a tree. All are beyond the power of any ten men to lift with simple strength of arm and leg. They stand by the thousand, testament to the great will of those who hacked them from the mother mountain, brought them here from so far away, and put them in regularity for purpose forgotten out of time.

Those who put them into place were not like us. They did not think like us. They were neither artist nor artisan who made these rocks. If these menhirs be giants, some of these giants have their pointed heads buried, their gross legs high and kicking, as though they manage a poor head-stand only with aid. This is a strange and careless way to place a rock. And within the great regularity that marks the whole, the rows are disorderly. But yet, to any man who lives with these rocks, it must in time become evident that these rocks are shaped as they are shaped, placed as they are placed, precisely as they were meant to be shaped, precisely as they were meant to be placed. There is power and purpose here beyond our power and purpose.

Such things are frightening. Few men live with the rocks.

Men do not dwell on Stone Heath, even far from the menhirs in their alignment. Stone Heath is a wasteland. Men come here to fight. Many men have fought in the shadow of the rocks. Single men. Armies. There are bones here, and armor. Cattle graze among the rocks. When Palsance was fiercer, men would sometimes say that blood made the children's milk richer. It is not a thing that a modern man would say, not with the Gets for neighbors in Nestor, but some cattle still graze on Stone Heath, amidst the rocks, amidst the bones.

The face of the full moon shone on Stone Heath. It was a chill night, and the rock legions were locked in the mist, Libera's Coverlet.

Naked the boy stood, alone among the towering rocks, lost in the mist that glowed from moonlight like the heart of a pearl. Neither mother nor father had he. He had no nation. There was no thing in all the world that was his. All that was his was a Name that was graven on his heart, and the Name was Libera.

He had no name of his own. He wore the name of Giles, which to him meant the Lover of Libera.

For a moment, he was cold. He did not know where he was. This was not the Stone Heath of his dreams. It was a far greater and stranger place than that, and he did not know it at first. All that he knew was the night, the moon and the mist, the cold and these great presences that might suddenly topple and crush him. And then he remembered the Name and all was well.

He wrapped the mist around him like a blanket. And he walked among the rocks as though they were his own domain. He did not need to know the name Stone Heath when he knew the name Libera. In the name of Libera he could see beyond the mist, see with the mist. It was as though the mist was his own senses, and anywhere there amongst the rock lines he might let his senses roam over the bones and armor.

Very nearby, he suddenly sensed Oliver. He was sure in his heart of hearts, without knowing how he knew,



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that Oliver was close. The knowledge leapt into his mind.

He called to him: "Oliver! It is me . . . . . Giles!"

And he was both not surprised and surprised, because Oliver called, in a voice that revealed much: "Here. Here." His voice was close and urgent, relieved and terrified, constricted.

They met between, nearer Oliver, for Haldane moved more surely and with less fear. The pearl mist glowed about them with moonfire.

Oliver said, "You are naked."

Giles said, "I've met no one to ask if he would clothe a naked man."

"But it has been so long," said Oliver. "I counted you . . . I counted myself . . . . You did not come to Barrow Hill."

"I did come to Barrow Hill," Giles said, "but by then you were not there. How many days has it been?"

"It has been four days since I saw you pursued by the hairy Get into the forest. Then I followed my map to Barrow Hill. After I got to Barrow Hill and was spying over a boulder there, I lost my map. A breeze took it from my hand like a swallow taking a fly. I do not know what happened to our pursuit while I followed my map, but then after two days in which I waited for you, Ivor and Arngrim were there together. I escaped them barely. I went in all directions until I lost my bearings. I did not know my right hand from my left. But Ivor and Arngrim followed me. I ran, and still they followed me. I ran from the pig and the horn wherever the flow of the countryside took me. Always I stayed before. Always they stayed behind. The sun was ever hidden and I did not know whether I ran through the heart of Nestor and beyond into the vastness of the Great Plains or whether I spun around and around in circles like a finger-top. But then I came to the Trenoth River and there was a boatman there. I could hear the horn behind me. I bargained with the boatman. I had naught else to give, so I gave him my magic book and my reading glasses to ferry me over the water. I kept only this cloak of all that I had. Then I followed the path that leads from the river to the bluff above and I found myself here. This could be Stone Heath. It must be Stone Heath. How came you to be here before me?"

"I did not know that I was before you," Giles said. "In this mist can you tell before from behind?"

"No."

"I was taken by the Get. He laid his mark upon me. Then I escaped. I went to Barrow Hill. Then . . . Then I came here."

"You were branded?" And there in mistglow, Oliver did turn Giles around and examine the mark on his shoulder. He said, "Yes, I see. It is a strange red mark. It is a great letter—an L."

Giles was struck by silence for a moment while his heart leapt to remember and wonder at the mystery. Libera. Libera. Then he said, "The name of the Get who captured me was Lyulf."

And then, like some reminder that they were not alone in the mist and the night, came the golden sound of Arngrim's Horn. Oliver started and kicked a helmet of some war against one of the great stones that was an inverted giant. It was a rattle in the night and Oliver looked about in apprehension.

He said, "Arngrim and Ivor and the pig are still behind me. We must run."



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"No," said Giles. "There is armor here. And weapons, if we seek them. Look, here is an old knife."

This knife that he found with the aid of his senses, the mist, was a wide-blade knife of iron, much rusted, with the handle broken. He held it out.

"That is no weapon for me," said Oliver.

"We will find you a better," Giles said, throwing it away. "But if it be you and me against Arngrim and Ivor and the pig Slut, then remember that Arngrim is old and Ivor has but one eye. You are fat and I am young. And the pig is a pig. I have chuckled it under the chin. It may still love me. So let us turn and fight."

Oliver was silent for a long time, and it seemed to Giles that he might set his cloak under his arm and flee again West down the line of stones.

But then Oliver looked at Haldane, as he thought of him, but Giles as it now was, and said: "I will fight with you. I have never fought with a sword before and I will be no aid to you. But I will fight beside you even if they kill me."

And so they cast about them. Oliver found a helmet that he thought befit him but did not. Giles found a short sword for Oliver, in the mist between the rocks.

Oliver tried it on the night, waving the old sword straight-armed, holding his cloak which he carried in his left hand as though he had meant to drop it but then forgot. Giles leaned back from the cut of that poor sword in the hand of this one who was not a swordsman. Then he turned to look for a better weapon for himself.

He could not find one. The mist did not tell him of swords. It told him of one running upon them.

Giles looked up. It was Ivor Fish-eye, doing again as he had done at Arngrim's Dun. He was rushing upon Giles, that defenseless boy, his cutting sword in his hand, intent to kill him.

Oliver threw his cloak at Ivor with his left hand, a toss to break his charge, like a slap on the nose to a boar. And it did that. It blinded Ivor's one eye, hanging and clinging to head and shoulder.

Ivor snatched it away, turning on Oliver. He said, "Once again as at Little Nail. I do not like you, wizard man. I do not believe in wuroxes and I do not believe in you. I saw you wave your arms high and chant while I surrounded Morca, but while my back was turned to you, I killed Morca and you ran away. I wanted to kill you then. I will kill you now."

Oliver tried to interpose his sword, but Ivor beat it aside with the ease of one who sets aside a kitten's batting paw. Then he killed Oliver. He struck him a blow to the helmet that undid him and then casually but viciously struck him a great hacking blow that no man could survive. It was a backhanded blow with great power. And then Ivor struck him once again another blow as great as that. Oliver fell dead.

"Now we shall finally match armies," Ivor said, turning upon Giles.

But Giles had a sword. "Libera," he said, and came forward to meet Ivor.

Ivor wore a link shirt. He laughed at the boy's rusted weapon. It was no match for his sound and well-loved piece. The boy's nakedness was no proof against his great bloody long sword.

He said, "When I came upon you to



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kill you at Little Nail, the wizard tripped me with his bag and I knocked my head against a post. I will not knock my head against a post here. This wizard will trip no one again. He is dead, and so are you, Haldane of Morca."

Giles swung his rusty weapon as though it were new. Ivor blocked the blow and flinders of rusted iron flew.

Ivor laughed.

Giles swung as before, and again Ivor blocked the swing and the sword came more to pieces.

"And once again," said Ivor, and laughed a second time.

Giles did strike one more blow. The sword dissolved to nothing on Ivor's blade and he was left with naught but the handle which was bits in his hand.

Ivor laughed a third time. And Ivor died.

He fell down dead. A sliver of rusted iron had passed through his link shirt to pierce his heart. The first of Haldane's enemies was dead at the hand of Giles, now that it was no longer of moment to Haldane. But that is always the way of life.

Giles knelt by both men and both were dead. Ivor was dead and Oliver was dead. He took Ivor's sword and rose again.

With his senses, he searched between the stones for Arngrim. He cast about to find him, his horn and his pig. It was like being in an outhouse on the night of the new moon and still knowing where everything was in the darkness—but the reverse of that. It was the full moon, not the new. There was a flood of light. And Giles was not an intruder in a place known, but was himself the place Stone Heath knowing an intruder.

And he sensed one in the mist, between his rocks, and he knew the place. There was a regularity in the ranks of rocks, and the one who moved among them was irregular.

Giles walked to meet Arngrim. When the one who tracked through the mist moved between the rocks, Giles matched him, so that ever more surely they two must meet. The place was there awaiting them.

Stone Heath was alive with power on this night. The mist glowed with it. The rocks surged with it. And the men who walked the lines were men with claim to power.

Their sources would be matched, one who was a Get against one who was not. He whose purposes were less would surely die.

So Giles moved lightly, naked young man, sword held before him, to meet the one who trailed and trailed. He knew that he was only the distance of the mist away. That close. Beyond the nearest rocks hid, there was the man.

And from that place, Giles heard a gaunt cough. Romund and he came together in the grass between the rock rows. The grass was cool and damp beneath his bare feet.

Coughing Romund coughed again. It seemed hollow in this moonfire mist.

He said: "Deldring, I am Farthing, come to kill you."

"I am not Deldring," Giles said. "I am not Haldane. I am not of the Gets. I am Giles. I am only of Libera."

"You are Haldane, and you will die for it," said Romund.

"I would not die for that. If you should kill me, I will have died for Libera. If you kill me, then I will know that Libera has willed it so."

"I will kill you," said Romund



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hoarsely.

Romund was a powerful man for one so gaunt and thin. He was a swordsman by whom swordsmen were measured. Giles fought well, but to Romund he was an Oliver to Ivor. He was but newly a man. Romund was a master.

Giles only managed to parry three blows from Romund. His arm was benumbed by the great force of Romund's blows. Romund coughed, and still coughing delivered another blow that Giles raised Ivor's iron sword to meet. Romund's sword skipped away and the flat struck Giles in the head and knocked him down, sword flying wildly from his hand.

Coughing Romund stared at Giles as he fell face downward and rolled away. He demanded: "What is that disgrace you bear on your naked shoulder?"

"It is a brand. It is the great letter L."

"You spoke truly. You are not of the Gets. Deldrings are not fit to be reckoned of our kind. I know you now. I know your back, which I have touched. That Lyulf should lie to me with my very hand touching you. That he would try to save you by branding you as a serf. And that you would agree. Even Morca would be ashamed of behavior such as yours, for if he was a Deldring, he was proud."

Coughing Romund prodded at Giles with his sword, backing him step by step. "When you strove to save your coward life, you spoke true. You are no Get. You are not Morca's son. And you are no threat to me, for no Get would follow such a one as you. But I would not have you save your coward life by such means as these. It is not right that such a one as you, without shame or propriety, should live. You are without manhood. Your father died killing many men. They and he would not rest if such a one as you remained alive. I foul my sword to kill you."

Giles was without help as he was forced to retreat. He was naked. He had no power against the sword in Romund's hand.

He called on Libera in his heart. He thought of her and not of himself.

And suddenly he thought of the stone that he and the Get Lyulf had lifted in the forest. It was a stone as large as some of these, and they two had lifted that rock, which no two men might do. And the rock had surged in their hands with its vital power. There were many rocks here like that rock. And he reached with that sense that he had here on Stone Heath this night and he saw that all these rocks were gravid with power.

Romund raised his sword to lay renegade-Haldane down. Giles placed his hands behind him, palms against the towering menhir, and Romund danced like a puppet and then was dead, overfilled with the force of the living rock. Giles' palms were left as hot as though they had touched a stove, and pulled away on the instant.

"Is this your magic?" a stern voice asked.

It was Arngrim there, coming out of the mists. By his knee was the black pig, Slut. In his hands he held the Horn of Life and Death. He wore a sword, but he did not touch it.

"Yes," said Giles. For only now did he realize that the powers that he had—the power to see, the power to walk, the power to direct—these new powers were magic powers.

"I heard what Romund said. Show me your brand. I must see how you are marked."



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Giles turned and let his grandfather see his shoulder.

"It is true. I see that you are not a Get. Let us try swords together."

"You wish to fight me with swords?"

"Would you kill me with your sly magic? I would not have such a coward for a grandson. Seize a sword, and we will fight and I will kill you cleanly."

Giles took up Ivor's sword, and Arngrim, that old man, drew his own sword. But then Giles suddenly thought that he should not do this. To fight with the sword was the Gettish way, and he was not a Get. No longer a Get. Even for his grandfather, there was no reason to behave as a Get would behave.

"Libera," he said within his heart, and cast the sword from him.

Arngrim said, "I had not thought to see this. Must I kill you defenseless?"

Giles said, "Would you do that?"

"I will kill you." And Arngrim stepped forward.

Giles backed then against the great menhir. "If you strive to kill me with your sword, I will place my hands on the rock and strike you as I struck Romund. This is a place of magic beyond all the wizards of the West."

The eagle old man put down his sword. "Would you kill me with your magic? I cannot believe that such a thing is possible. If you would employ such a means as this magic, then it is better that I should be dead."

Giles said, "I would not kill you defenseless." And he stepped away from the rock.

Arngrim raised his sword then and walked toward Giles, the pig Slut pressing close to his leg. "Take sword or die."

Giles stood back to the rock a second time. Arngrim put his sword down once more. "Kill me then with your magic."

Giles stood away again from the stone. Arngrim again raised his sword and advanced. "Fight me, coward, or die."

Giles stepped back to the menhir a third time, placed his palms against the surging rock and directed the power at Arngrim. There was warmth in his palms, but not heat, and there was no surge of discharge. Giles did not understand.

Arngrim then raised the sword he held and stepped forward. "It is the good Gettish power that you have forsworn that is proof against your magic. Your magic is as nothing. I will show you Gettish power now and kill you."

Giles called upon Libera in his heart. "Remember My Name," She had said. "Remember My Name."

He Remembered. And he stood helpless before the sword.

And even as Arngrim came forward, the black pig Slut, pressing close to the old man, squealed and ran beneath Arngrim's feet. He tripped and fell to the ground, which he must not have done in battle for thirty years and more, since he was raw. Giles' heart surged.

Giles said, "Your Gettish magic is all in swords. My power, which is of this land, is proof against your Gettish magic. Seek to slay me as you may, you shall not."

Arngrim rose and strove to strike Giles down for these words, but again the pig tripped him. The old man turned in anger on the pig, but it ran squealing out of reach.

"If you kill the pig, my protection will be elsewhere," Giles said. "Your magic cannot harm me."



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"Do not say that my power is magic," said Arngrim in anger. "My Gettish power is not magic! My Gettish power is the true life-stuff of the Gets, and it is not magic. It is natural! It comes of our nature."

"No more than my power," said Giles.

"That cannot be," said Arngrim, and struggled to rise. Before him on the ground was the sword that Giles had from Ivor, had used, had lost, had recovered, had thrown away. "Where got you this sword?"

Giles said, "From the hand of Ivor Fish-eye."

Arngrim said, "How got you this sword from Ivor Fish-eye?"

"I killed Ivor Fish-eye with a shattered sword that I snatched from among the bones."

"Show me this," said Arngrim. "Such a one as you could not kill Ivor with a sword."

"And could not kill Romund," said Giles.

"By magic."

"Against his Gettish power, his power of Farthing. It was not proof for him as it is for you."

"Show me Ivor that I may judge you," said Arngrim. "Nay, do not fear to walk with me through the mist. If you are right, should I seek to do you harm, a rock will fall and crush me."

"That is so," said Giles. "But what you cannot imagine—that will be my protection."

They walked the corridors between the rocks until they came to the place where Ivor and Oliver lay. Giles followed his senses which were in the mist, and brought them straight.

Arngrim looked at Ivor, dead in the cold light of the moon. "I see no wound," he said. "How is he dead if not by magic?"

Giles said, "My sword of rust broke on his sword of iron and a splinter pierced his heart."

Arngrim bent to see. "And how is this shard come through his mail if not by magic?"

"It was not magic. It was but my power."

"I do not understand," said Arngrim.

"There is no magic," said Giles, "else all men are magicians. There is only each man's power. The power of the hunt for Ivor. The power of Farthing for Romund. The power of the Gets that you keep. And the power of . . . I will not say what is in my heart, not the Name I carry. But my power is the power of all this land, Nestor and Palsance. There is power here in this land that no Get may ever know because he is a Get."

"Do not say that," Arngrim said. "I know the power of the Gets as no other man. If I had given that power to Morca, he would not now be dead, but he would be the great king he dreamed to be. But Morca was a man who recked not, who ravished, who carelessly killed, a man who kept wizards, a man who walked with witches in the woods—for so it was told to me by one I believe."

"Who?"

"By Morca. In drink. In boast. I would not give that power to him because he was not the man that Garmund was, from whom the power came to me. That power was too great for Morca."

"But Get power cannot be all-in-all," said Giles. "There is the power that I hold, and that is good power which I believe as I believe my heart. If this



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power be the magic of witches, then the power of witches must be good." He touched Oliver's dead body. "And the power of wizards is no all-in-all, but power of its own kind, and that is not Gettish kind. There are many powers, magic only to other men."

"There is Gettish power," said Arngrim. "Which I know and keep safe."

"There is greater power than Gettish power."

"There is not better power, else why should we rule and other men not?"

"Gets rule where they rule. They do not rule where they do not rule," said Giles. "They do not rule on Stone Heath."

"What is your power if it cannot do me harm?"

"What is your power if it cannot do me harm?"

"I will not hear," said Arngrim. "I will follow after and kill you when your magic does not keep you safe."

"Nay," said Giles. "Do not strive to kill me, for you shall not."

He knew not what to say. He knew something and could not speak it. He knew it was important, but he could not call it to mind.

But it was Giles alone who could not think. Giles alone. Giles called upon Libera to help him.

Then again, in his mind, as though appearing of itself, was what he must say. He could not believe it because he knew nothing like it. But he believed in Libera, so he must speak it.

"Match your power against mine," he said. "You must prove that you have the right."

"And how shall that be done?" asked Arngrim. "Shall I use my sword against you and see if the pig dashes out of the darkness?"

He put his hand to the sword. The pig squealed somewhere close by in the mist. Arngrim dropped his hand away.

"No," said Giles. "Here lying dead is Oliver, who was Morca's wizard. Bring him to life again."

"I cannot," said Arngrim. "I cannot bring a dead Get back to life. I would not bring this wizard back to life."

"He is no wizard now," said Giles.

"Nay. He is dead."

"Not because he is dead. Because he has no book. Join with me and bring him to life again. If our powers, yours and mine, can together do what cannot be done separately, then there must be more and better magic than Gettish magic . . . "

"That cannot be. There is no Gettish magic."

". . . of which Gettish magic is but a part."

"There is only our good natural power."

"Place your power together with mine and let us see what is revealed."

Arngrim said: "I cannot. How can I do this and be a Get? How can I do this and be a Get? It is not possible."

"What is your power if you refuse? Will the power of the Gets still remain if you refuse, or will it show itself as nothing so that I might kill you then with the touch of a butterfly wing? If you refuse, will the Gets still rule in Nestor?"

Arngrim was caught between two hard surfaces and there was no escape for him.

He said, "Nothing will happen. I cannot bring the dead to life."

"Then join me and prove that my power is a false magic," Giles said.

"I will do that," said Arngrim.



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Together, these two, grandfather and grandson, raised Oliver's body and carried it to the heart of the rock, that place within the rock thousands where the greatest power was secretly hidden. Giles knew that place, and did not know he knew. He led the way through the mists of Stone Heath, through the living mist, to the heart of rock, to the living rock.

There they placed Oliver's body down. He was a small man, a plump man. He had not yet been old, but his hair was gray. It seemed wrong for this man to be dead as he was dead, with two wounds in his side like axe cuts. He was not a man of swords.

In death, he seemed small and vulnerable, no great man. No man for Gets to fear. No man for any man to fear.

Giles stood back. All around them were great stones, sentinels of long standing. Not sentinels, but witnesses. Not witnesses, but sources of power. No, not sources of power, but conduits for power that came from elsewhere and was gathered here for this moment.

"Blow your horn for Oliver to rise," said Giles.

Arngrim raised the horn in his hands and he blew. And it was a sound like none that had come from the horn before.

"Blow!" said Giles. "Blow!"

Arngrim blew, putting into the call all his Gettish power, which was not enough magic by itself to make the dead to rise. But it was great power, for the world seemed to rock at the sound.

Giles lost himself in the sound.

He did not think of Get or Nestorian. He did not think of magic or power. He did not think of mother or father. He did not think of Stone Heath, of great menhirs, of mist, of moonlight. He did not think of Arngrim. He did not think of Oliver. He did not think of Háldane. He did not think of Giles.

He thought of Libera. And in his heart, he said: "Thy will be done." And that was all.

When he came to himself, he heard the sounds of crying. There was sweat on his forehead. There was a gulf in his stomach. And it was he crying, and he could not understand, nor could he help himself. He cried happily and helplessly.

And he heard other crying. For Arngrim, that old man who had not cried since he left his cradleboard, he was crying.

And there was other crying, too. Other crying.

And Arngrim said, as though it were too much for him to bear: "I am not a Get now. I am not a Get now."

For Oliver, who was dead, was now alive.

## Epilogue: Arrival

### 23

It was Joy-Month in Palsance, that month in spring when all the best flowers grow. The easy countryside was green. Men and women and children all celebrated the spring in fair and country games.

The two, the old man and the young one, Oliver and Giles, walked the open roads and none was there to forbid them passage. They walked without fear. And when they stopped, they stopped for celebration, they stopped for fair, and country games.

They celebrated and were happy, but they were not like those they paused



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among, though Oliver might drink with men his age, and Giles was more than twice kissed. They carried large things in their hearts that might not be spoken.

On a late afternoon, on a road that branched from the road to Fomoria, they came to their destination. It was at the end of a day when there had been flowers. There was golden light, and on their left was a storm, hanging heavy near the setting sun. The storm was black and the rain could be seen like threads in the sky.

The storm paralleled their passage and gave them company as they walked through the temperate golden spring. It was a new moment to Giles in this world in which everything was always new, and he loved it well.

Before them, above the road on a hillside, was a cottage, not a palace or great house. It was not unlike other cottages they had passed. A small house, a thatched house. Beyond it, there were sheep at graze on the hillside, happy in the golden light, knowing nothing of storms. There were flowers planted before the cottage.

"I had forgotten that," said Oliver.

They made their way up the hill, and then followed the path that led to the cottage door. They stood before the door in the gold and knocked at the green door. It was a double door, not like those in Nestor.

The top of the door opened, and a woman stood looking out. She was of middle age and she held one hand to large bosom.

"Yes," she said uncertainly.

Oliver said: "Do you not know me, Berthe? It is I, Noll, your own brother, returned at last from my adventures with my grandson Giles."

"Noll," she said. "Can it really be you, Noll? It is. It is! It is my own dear Noll, come home at last."

The door was opened to them and they were swept inside. As they were held and cried over and exclaimed upon, the red light of the last sun struck home in the dark storm as it reached them at last. Thunder crashed, and the red rain fell like fire on the land.

Oliver—Sailor Noll returned from his long travels—and his grandson Giles watched the rain fall for a moment, and then the cottage door was closed behind them and they were home.

—ALEXEI & CORY PANSHIN

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# fantasy books

*reviewed by Fritz Leiber*

HAUNTINGS, ed. by Henry Mazzeo, illustrated by Edward Gorey, Doubleday, 1968, 317 pages.

This collection of stories of the supernatural heats the black cockles of my heart—or rather deliciously freezes them, since I am more an ice-man of the Scandinavian and German north than a hot-heart of the Mediterranean south, an Odin-man rather than a Zeus-man.

It is so damn good to find a new anthology devoted to true spectral terror rather than gory grue (though there is a Gorey here), the vagaries of schizophrenia, and murky subconscious meanderings and maunderings! Lovecraft would have given his atheistical blessing. *Hauntings* is also the title of a collection of spectral tales by Vernon Lee, published in New York in 1890 by Frank F. Lovell and Co. Vernon Lee was the pen-name of the Englishwoman Viola Paget, who lived in Italy and wrote many remarkable ghost stories. In her *Hauntings* are the superb "Amour Dure" and "Oke of Okehurst" (or "The Phantom Lover"), together with "Dionea" and "A Wicked Voice." She also wrote the tantalizingly titled *Prince of the Hundred Soups*.

The cream of *this Hauntings* are "The Man Who Collected Poe," by Robert Bloch, "The Haunted Dolls's House," by Montague Rhodes James, "The Open Door," by Mrs. Margaret Oliphant, "The Face," by Edward Frederic Benson, and "The Red Lodge," by Herbert Russell Wakefield. Though all 17 are superb stories of their sort, along with a very elusive 18th— "Find the hidden faces in this picture."

Mazzeo's introduction is good, while the italicized forewords and tailpieces he attaches to each tale contain many a nugget of ghostly fact to be treasured by the *aficionado* of the *genre*. Clearly the editor's heart is in the book, though not in the literal fashion of "the heart of a small boy" Bloch keeps in a bottle on his desk.

"The Lonesome Place" by the late August Derleth expertly conveys the universal terrors of children—he was always very good on boys—though it is marred by a stock stark-horror ending.

Lovecraft's "In the Vault" is one of his very rare conventional ghost stories, with grotesquely macabre denouma a bit reminiscent of Bierce. It is foreshadowed by "George Birch acquired a limitation—" Yes, he lost two basic appendages.

Wellman's "Where Angels Fear" is one of the fine traditional ghost stories occasionally published in Campbell's meteorically modern and sadly short-lived magazine, *Unknown*, which also broke its own rules by publishing my first sword and sorcery



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stories. More than once on buying a Fafhrd-Mouser yarn, Campbell wrote me, "This is really a *Weird Tales* sort of story, but—" I'd known that myself; the post-Wright *WT* was always bafflingly leery of my stuff, especially the Howardesque sagas.

"Lot No. 249" by Conan Doyle is a genuinely chilling and eerily atmospheric tale of a reanimated mummy used to commit assaults—the earliest example of this plot the editor knows of. A tale of "filthy Egyptian tricks" turned in the sacred precincts of Old College, Oxford, where strapping, clean-cut British health-maniacs are forever rowing, running, and boxing (and occasionally cracking a book). This story may well have been the germ of Sax Rohmer's *Brood of the Witch Queen*—there are in both telltale subconscious hints of male homosexuality, a righteous horror of bringing a woman to one's rooms, and also an episode of undressing after a river-tumble. Lovecraft praised *Brood* and it does contain the only two chapters of really good writing I've ever found in Rohmer, though of course I have a very soft spot in my heart for dear old Dr. Fu Manchu, who with his red Zayat-Kiss centipedes, his big black spiders with diamond eyes, and his asthmatic Hamadryad baboons with very long arms most useful for strangling at a distance, his deadly dacoits and his thugs, should by all rights have been special-weapons adviser to Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap, speeding the latter's victory at Dien Bien Phu. Or perhaps Fu was really there.

"Thus I Refute Beelzy" is John Collier's thumbnail classic of the drastic supernatural steps taken by a small boy to thwart his self-righteously sadistic, bottom-bemused, paddling dentist-papa. A real rival to Saki's "Shredni Vashtar," where that dread beastie takes good care of another small boy's oppresive auntie.

"Levitation" is Joseph Payne Brennan's short of an odd instance of anti-gravity occuring against the well-realized background of a cheap carnival operating in a rural locale.

"The Whistling Room" is one of William Hope Hodgson's ebulliant accounts, involving sudden frights and bone-wrenching action, of the exploits of his psychic detective, Carnacki the Ghost Finder. It has the usual frame: Carnacki dines four friends, tells them without preamble the story of his latest ghost-hunt, and then curtly shows them out the door without opportunity for a single question or comment—surely the most tractable captive audience in literary history. There is another of the expected Hodgson flaws, this time an American client speaking in a lingo never talked in the States or even in any other British writer's imagination. But withal a gripping and well-founded tale. The chief physical manifestation of the demonic ghost is a baroque pip.

Priestly's "The Grey Ones" is effete and perhaps overly cute, but makes a cogent comment on our growing habit of conformity.

H. G. Wells' "The Stolen Body" is the best, most vigouous, and most frightening of his rare supernatural tales.

Alfred Noyes' "Midnight Express" demonstrates that his talent for the spectral, which most of us know from his poems "The Highwayman" and "Forty Singing Seamen" and "The Return of Morgan and Fingal," extended also to prose, with here a spooky use of the Döppelganger theme. And speaking of ghostly doubles, don't miss Robert Altman's smashing spectral film *Images*, starring Susannah York, who among many facets of an Academy-Award-winning performance reads over shots of a beautifully frightening Irish countryside, sections from her own fantasy book about the Land of the Ums, *In Search of Unicorns*, which may already be first-published by the time you read this; I highly recommend it.

"The Visiting Star" is by Robert Aickman, modern British practitioner of the supernatural horror story. It is one of the least murky, ambiguous, and psychological of his tales, which frequently show those



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flaws. Involving professional and amateur theater people in a gray-washed, winter-bound mining town, it is guaranteed to give you chills and glooms.

Henry James's "The Ghostly Rental" is mostly a leisurely, traditional ghost tale by the highly respectable author of "The Turn of the Screw." It is written with a clarity, organization, and general literary mastery in a field known for its sloppy writing. And it has moments of spectral terror that really get you at gut level. And it's so British that I kept thinking its Cambridge was the English one, rather than across the river from Boston. But the realistic ending erases most or all of the eeriness. It is psychological not supernatural. Clearly the brother of the top American philosopher, the pragmatist William James, did not believe in ghosts and he lets you know it. For him, ghosts were disreputable ruffians not to be invited into his tidy New England mind.

While Mrs. Oliphant did believe in ghosts—to get to the five best stories in this volume—"The Open Door" is as clearly told and has as carefully laid-in atmosphere as "Rental." But it also has a tenderness, warmth, and conviction Henry James couldn't attain.

This long story of a Scottish haunting and of a boy sufficiently sensitive to sense and respond to it, is one of the all-time gems of the genre.

Robert Bloch is not just the brilliant writer of the films *Psycho, Straitjacket, The Night Walker, The House that Dripped Blood, Asylum*, etc., but also the author of such top weird tales as "Mr. Steinway," "Enoch," and "The Dream Makers." Here we find "The Man Who Collected Poe," a story of such mounting dread, slow-thickening atmosphere, and such literary excellence—in short, so Poe-esque a tale—that the distinguished Poe Scholar Dr. T. O. Mabbott asked Bloch to complete Poe's unfinished tale "The Light-House," an assignment that Bloch fulfilled beautifully, adding another jewel to the author's Arkham collection *Pleasant Dreams—Nightmares*.

M. R. James was of course deservedly the dean of English specter-story writers, though his ghosts are not revenants of the dear departed, but murderous demons with the mould of centuries on them, and, as Lovecraft noted, often *touched* before being *seen*. "The Haunted Doll's House" is a justified variant on his "The Mezzotint," and was written for the library of two hundred doll-size books written by eminent British authors in their own hands, for the famous dolls' house presented to Queen Mary in 1924. And I pity the doll who reads it late at night in Doll-land. He or she will part company with his tiny doll trousers or her doll skirt, petticoats and bloomers.

E. F. Benson is a British writer of mostly so-so horror stories. "The Face" is his best effort, using the delectable and original gimmick of the curtain-raiser dream, from which the dreamer wakes with the certain knowledge that the next time she shuts her eyes she will be plunged into a really sweaty and heavy nightmare. It's always happened that way to her. Think about it.

H. R. Wakefield is the British author (They do excel in this field, don't they?) of two almost peerless collections of ghost stories, *The Return at Evening* and *Others Who Returned*, with the Arkham-published *The Clock Strikes Twelve* coming in a strong third. They are witty, wholly traditional and wholly modern (a prime paradoxical trick if you can pull it off), atmospheric, skeptical, and underplayed. I have always thought "The Red Lodge" finest of a very fine lot and now I discover, due to Mr. Mazzeo's delvings, that it was the very first ghost story Wakefield wrote and that it is about an actual house where Wakefield briefly lived and witnessed some fringe-sort supernatural manifestations which gave him to ponder.

There!—I've counted back and confirmed that I've covered all 17 stories.

Oh, but there was a concealed 18th tale, I said. Well, it's hidden, by Poe's device of the obscurity of the obvious (the biggest names on maps are often the hardest to find), on the



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book's dust jacket. A pictorial ghost story in 17 frames depicting the apparitions of an elusive Woman in White, quite as definitely a story as the artist's *The West Wing*. Edward Gorey also has provided for each tale excellent inside illustrations, which would be better still on better paper—I have only the Book Club Edition.

More about the winsome Gorey and other writers of pictorial fantasy in a forthcoming *Fantasy Books* column.

—FRITZ LEIBER

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Isaiah (cont. from page 68)
neighborhood synagogue for meditation and prayer but neighborhood synagogues, of course, are closed and locked—vandalism abounds—on Thursday nights and Williamsburgh is too far to travel on the dangerous underground.

So I RETURN and explain the situation as best as I can and apologize for my lapses and make clear my efforts and He listens quietly, hearing me through to the end as is His wont, smoking a cigarette down to the end and then putting it absently underneath the throne, unextinguished, the faint residue of smoke surrounding like incense. "I don't know what to say," I conclude, "there are no easy answers."

"That's true," He says. He shrugs. He lights another cigarette and sits back. After waiting for so long he has cultivated nothing if not patience and his attitude betrays no restlessness. "Still, we have to come to some kind of a decision."

"It's not my decision," I say quietly, not in an offensive or disagreeable way but firmly enough so that my position is clear. "I just can't make that decision; it isn't my right."

"I understand," He says. He sighs, shrugs again, puts the cigarette out under his foot and stands heavily, using His hands to wedge Himself from the throne. He grunts; He has, after all, been inert for so long. "I might as well," He says finally. "I've been waiting for so long, hoping that things would just work themselves out toward a decision but your ethical culture committee was quite right, weren't they? You have to live within yourself and make your own way. I guess so," He says. He ventures a signal and from the haze where they have been waiting for seven thousand years, the Ten Priests emerge, whispering to one another.

"I should have accepted that a long time ago," He says and gestures again; the white birds are free now, the Great Snake Itself, muttering to itself, wraps in a coil around the heavens and dimly, with the sound of wind, the darkness and the light descends.

Watching all of this I do not know if I am happy or sad but it is good, after so long, to see Him back at work again, doing what He always did best. The bitter chassid would be astonished by His grandeur. Massapequa: who knows?

—BARRY N. MALZBERG



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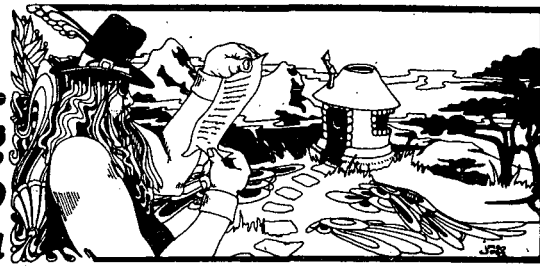
# According to You



*Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to* According To You, *Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.*

Dear Ted,

Your guess concering the don't-re-cover note in British paperbacks (FANTASTIC, Feb.) is ingenious but not correct. It's meant to stop libraries from rebinding pb's for issue on loan. A British hardback publisher relies on a sale of about 1500 copies to libraries in order to hit his break-even point, and a few years ago this minimum figure was being seriously undermined by the habit of putting boards around the pb edition. As far as I know the habit of returning only the front cover of an unsold book is not common in Britain; our shipping distances are so much shorter.

JOHN BRUNNER
London NW3 2TY
England

*I stand corrected.*—TW

Ted,

Okay. I'd have to be two kinds of berries not to subscribe to FANTASTIC and AMAZING now. Since I subscribe to semi-prozines—which are really crummy but intriguing because they're written largely by beginners like me—I sure ought to subscribe to something that's good. Even before "The Fallible Fiend" appeared, I'd decided I'd better subscribe to FANTASTIC. But now, only half way through March AMAZING, I know I've got to have them both. Besides the money saved on newstand prices, I won't have to drive twenty miles to the closest newstand (and as far as I can find, the only one) which carries these 'zines. Why is it your inferior competitors are on every Seattle newstand and you're not?

Back to "The Fallible Fiend": I didn't think deCamp had it in him. For my own taste I'd have preferred less humor, as I take my fantasy very seriously. But there's certainly nothing inferior about humorous writing, and this was one of the best. The paperback's painting of Zdim is sad next to FANTASTIC's.

However, when you say "Fiend" marks a changing point in FANTASTIC, I trust this does not mean you're going to try to recapture the flavor of *Unknown* exclusively. I'd prefer to see FANTASTIC strike a blow midway between the simplistic horror and adventure of *Weird Tales* and the logical magic of *Unknown*, without really trying to be like either.

Though I'm an idiot about Heroic Fantasy, this does not mean it easily pleases me. My prejudice in that genre's favor makes me more critical where it is concerned. I wish FANTASTIC would use more, but J. Coulson's "Wizard of Death" was a dull, unoriginal, adventureless, unmagical, unrewarding thing to read. I found my mind wandering into other subjects while reading it. And you intend to run a series of these?

Speaking of wizards, did I hear you say LeGuin's Earthsea stories are juveniles? I



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think Ursula's long drawn, poetic style in these novels would strain a younger reader's attention. Her style is fresh, original, adult and I predict timeless.

I'd like to know how you decide what artists illustrate what. Kaluta's ink rendition of Zdim and then his cover painting were both real works of art. But he simply wasn't in his own with that colomn thing that dripped out of his pen for *Agony in the Garden*. You should pay more attention to where an artist's talents lie and not over extend him. Mike Hinge has given us a drawing for Vance's *Trullion* which any artless school kid could have done with a ruler and B. Graham is up to his usual comic book frames for *Two Men and a Rock*. With only three drawing in the issue—more than adequate—it seems more effort could have gone into them.

Last on the agenda; doesn't deCamp know any more literary swordmen?

AMOS SALMONSON
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*We are, I hope, striking an original balance in the range of fantasy we publish. Upcoming: a new Fafhrd and Grey Mouser story by Fritz Leiber. As for LeGuin, I fully agree; I am a great admirer of her work. But the Earthsea books* are *marketted as "juveniles"—see Mrs. LeGuin's letter on this subject in the November, 1970, issue of our companion magazine,* AMAZING STORIES *(back issues available from the publisher). And yes, deCamp does know more literary sorcerers and swordsmen—as you'll see in forthcoming issues.*—TW

Dear Ted,

I tend to start reading A&F from the lettercol and the features, so I'll start commenting there. While Dixon's main thrust is (perhaps) correct, a few of his contentions bear dissection. First, most "only casual readers" of SF (and I was one) would tend to read a library copy of *Orbit* found under the NEW AND RECOMMENDED sign, or a famous writer in *Playboy* (whose circulation numbers are higher than AMAZING, FANTASTIC, *Galaxy, If, F&SF,* and *Analog* put together . . . . alas) than a purely insular, in-field magazine. The now-famous Mrs. Anybody would be more likely to see Bradbury in *Esquire* than in A&F. I do agree, however, that the success of the ballot-in-magazine plan is as unlikely as the current set-up. (How about printing the ballots on the backs of True cigarette packs, to compensate for those M.F.-ing insert ads? It's a thought . . .)

Next: M. McCuiston, whom I suppose you didn't answer because you're sick of answering those same questions, is a Dark-Age denizen of the first degree. You don't dig it? Skip it. You state, M., that a writer should not tell you what to think; don't tell them what to write (or, more importantly, what *not* to write). Sex is a rather nice thing, after all, in any mutually tolerable form. (Yes, the bullshit-liberal "consenting adults" speech.) So go back to your oubliette, or wherever "morally upstanding" censors lock themselves to view Jerry Lewis movies (no offense to Mr. Lewis). Or better yet, M., I await your reply in these pages, or privately, at the address below.

I tend to disagree . . . *myself* . . . with both of John Robinson's principles. First, the covers: the ones that have really grabbed me in FANTASTIC recently are 10/71 (whose background and display portion were black), 2/72 (light blues/purples), 8/72 (Conan in greens), 2/73 and 4/73. *Not* bright colors. (I must insert that I'm also a sucker for Hinge's covers, but that's because his conflict of simplicity and complexity is striking, not because the colors are bright.) I think mood is, to a great extent, more important than color.

And, Ted: in contrast to Boutillier, I think FANTASTIC should primarily rooted in fantasy, of all sorts (including space fantasy). So much for letters.

Now, the features: Does your statement that ". . . the Panshins' historical survey of SF begins to draw to a close" refer to the entire *Dimension* series, or merely to the historical section therein? I hope the series is to see a fate better than the oblivion to which *Fantasy Books* and *Literary Swordsmen and*



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*Sorcerers* have been consigned. I'd like to see those again soon, too. (Whatever happened to your review of Marvel's *Conan*? You can add to it *Kull, Thongor, Warrior of Mars*, the *Burroughs* stuff, and the forthcoming *Shadow*.)

And the fiction, lastly. I'm saving the novel, but all the shorts were good for a change. Gardner's novelet was powerful literary stuff, the Shiras 'Tokkin and the Professor' short cute (as was the rest of the series), Dann's as warpedly good as one expect Jack's stuff to be. The C. L. Grant was strangely haunting . . . sort of Bradbury-cum-Ellison. But . . . well, Busby's "Once Upon a Unicorn" was a veritable pisser! Written in an extremely appropriate style, this was far superior to any of Busby's previous stuff. Perhaps Charles Pitts *is* right, after all!

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*Yes*, SF in Dimension *has, regrettably, concluded . . . at least for the time being. The Panshins want to get back to writing fiction—and after "The Son of Black Morca," one can only cheer them on. But* Fantasy Books *is back on a regular basis and de-Camp will be returning soon with another in his series of* Literary Swordsmen & Sorcerers. *As for my* Conan *review, as I mentioned recently, it's still in the works. One of these days . . .*—TW

Dear Ted,

The April FANTASTIC impressed me mainly due to its containing both some of the worst and some of the best work I've seen printed in that magazine. The Panshins' first part of "Son of Black Morca" by far outshone the rest of the issue. Their representation of barbaric life was by far the most realistic interpretation I've seen in S & S writings. My only complaint is that the Panshins' have to be pretty heartless to create such a delightful stable of characters only to kill them off in part one. (Who do they think they are, Heinlein or somebody?)

I then turn the page only to read a marvelous example of how not to write a Gothic. I am, of course, referring to Gardner's mad scientist, who is finally overcome by the forces of nature. Really Ted, are contributions so slim that you must needs print this, or did you owe Gardner a favor? But it was good of you to sandwich this story between the previously mentioned "Black Morca" and C. L. Grant's mood piece, one of the better such you've printed. "Rags" and "Bird Song" both had promise of being good stories, but in the first it seems Dann got lost in his own mists of illusion while the climax (was there one?) of "Bird Song" didn't justify the build up. "Once Upon A Unicorn", a delicious humorous tidbit, was put in just in time. I hope we'll see more Busby in later issues. About the Frank Eck letter/editorial I'll only say that I almost forgot my own problems in finding your mags while reading it.

Are there any plans for reprinting the *SF in Dimension* articles? Though just what they're doing in FANTASTIC with the new editorial policy makes about as much sense as Mars, one of its moons, a pterodactyl and an unbearded Black Morca appearing on the same cover. Have you ever thought about having an artist draw a cover, then giving it to a writer to write a story about it? I think Campbell did this successfully.

At least with both more "Son of Black Morca" and another story about our favorite Cimmerian coming up, you needn't worry about me not buying the next issue. But it would be nice to have some good short stories in between.

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*You'll find the answers to most of your questions in the editorial this issue. The* SF in Dimension *pieces were, in their early appearances, a groping toward a fully rationalized view of science fiction. Later pieces explored this by-then formulated view as extended notes (and, later yet, condensations and byways) for the Panshins' book,*



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The World Beyond the Hill, *which will be published by Scribners. This book (which runs to quite a few hundred manuscript pages—more than double the length of a typical novel) encompasses all the material in* SF in Dimension, *and then some. We'll keep you posted on its publication schedule.*—TW

Dear Ted,

I hate "response" letters. I hate to write 'em, and I detest seeing them appear, especially in a magazine that devotes only limited space to a lettercol. Nonetheless, there is something that needs saying, to M. McCuiston and others, about "trends" in science fiction and why they appear—and if I don't say it, I flatter myself to think that it won't get said.

In any medium, trends are inevitable. What one author uses to sell stories may give another writer the idea for an entirely different use of the same basic concept; what one director uses to convey mood or feeling in a scene of a movie may be "swiped" to convey a similar mood by another director. In practical terms, what works will be swiped, and swiped again, and again, until a trend has been started, and it appears that *everybody's* doing it. Trends give inexperienced writers something to work with, something they *know* is popular, a gimmick they *know* will work.

Certainly, trends can be destructive; instead of trying to be original, many amateurs try to put all the trends together so they can make a sale. This happens in all media, though, and the people who work like that rarely make it in their "chosen field".

The specific trends that M. McCuiston complains about are not just sf/fantasy gimmicks, but are rooted in the changes that American society has undergone in the last decade or so. He cites the "think-like-I-do" approach of some writers in spreading their philosophy as something he doesn't like, not grasping the real point of such writers: that most of us are taught that if we are right, it is our duty to *get out there and proselytize!* There are few philosophies, religious or otherwise, that do not actively seek out people with other ideas and try to convert them. Presented with the same opportunity, McCuiston would probably try to convince each reader of *his* POV.

He also complains that "I am opposed to violence . . . . it doesn't bother too much. Except when the author overdoes it . . . . I know people like that. They used to pull flies' wings off, now they talk about car wrecks . . . . (they should) find a less publicized way of working out their violent sexual abberrations." I won't try to fight half-digested Freud, since I'm not a follower of that school of psychology; still, it should be pointed out that violence in writing does *not* require that the writer be a "violent" person, one that is particularly prone to tear apart insects or anything else. The people who explicitly describe violence have become aware of exactly how much violence is around us each day, and they're describing it, just as they could describe a spring landscape or a beautiful woman. (And "aberrations" has only one "b".)

Thirdly (and finally) he complains about the amount and type of sex in the stories and illustrations. Once again, for the most part, the fascination with sex is something that has come about because the morés of this generation are much looser than a short time ago; modesty, to a large extent, is a victim of *ye moderne tymes*. Authors may write about sex because they have "guilt feelings", as McCuiston says; more probably, (as in Barry Malzberg's "On Ice" in the January AMAZING) it's a case of there being thousands of stories involving sex that were unpublishable up to a few years ago. As things loosened up, this kind of material became printable—and let's face it, sexual fantasies are indeed fantasies, something outside the realm of normal existence—which is what fantasy is all about.

Trends are natural phenomena; they are ingrained in the submission/acceptance method of publishing. Some of the greatest fantasy writers of all time were involved in trends: Lovecraft, Howard, Wells, Smith, many others. Without them, most young



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writers would never get started—and the older, more experienced pros would go in twenty thousand different directions. They're the backbone of AMAZING, and FANTASTIC, and almost every magazine like them.

But have no fear, M. McCuiston: they'll pass. Unless the sf and fantasy industries stagnate completely, they'll pass, to be replaced by other (and probably equally offensive, to some) trends, which will be replaced by still others.

There is yet hope.

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*In a recently published interview in the British fanzine,* Cypher, *Harry Harrison remarked upon the charge that he used violence in his stories by saying, "I utilise violence too often, I'm sure. I'm a creature of the pulps, a victim of early* SF, *but I'm morally against violence . . . We live in a violent world. America is a country imbued with death; we kill 100,000 people on the highways each year . . . . I said this before; I've perhaps used too much violence in the past. It was a habit, but we're living in violent times. We're just a hair away from violence right here in England's happy ground. They used to cut your arm off for stealing a loaf of bread. How many crimes used to be punishable by death?" (To which Brian Aldiss replied, "It was 149 at the turn of last century.") I think that buttresses your point, which is well put.*—TW

Dear Mr. White:

In the prose form, and other than in theology, science fiction and fantasy are the only genres that call regularly upon the miraculous. It is the purpose of this letter to preach the principle of

An Economy of Miracles.

Here emphasis is upon *economy,* upon minimizing the count of anomalies, not upon entirely expunging the monstrous and the preternatural. Although it appears that SF necessarily contains some fantasy, the concern is here with what might be termed "hard core" science fiction, or "scientific" SF.

As Macbeth put it, stones have been known to move and trees to speak, but too many writers demand that the trees speak to the stones, who hear and obey. This puts the reader in the position of Dryden's character, who stood "oppressed with awe, and stupid at the wondrous things he saw".

Unnatural phenomena may be regarded as singularities in the field of the narrative and too many of them become an obstacle to the flow of the story. The reader, as well as the protagonist, becomes exhausted, in a continual struggle with so many godlets from so many machines.

The most interesting things in SF are new solutions to old problems and old solutions to new problems. But the interpolation of minor miracles, the insertion of periodic discontinuities in the form of unnatural extraordinaries, solves no problems, but merely evades them.

The protagonist leads a precarious existence, confronted with a threat of obliteration by largely invisible menaces, with emphasis on "invisible". No one expects the hero to be able to safely peer around every corner, but the reader surely expects hidden dangers and their evasion to be consequences of more than casual inventions of the moment. Nor can one expect the reader to be constantly agog and agape at a lengthy parade of improbabilities and mystical aberrations.

Again, the matter here is not that there should be no miracles, but that there should not be too many of them.

Every problem, as been said many times, should carry within itself the genesis of its solution. What is germane in the immediate context is that there should be a rational explication, rational in terms of the prepared and stated postulates which the author has adopted. It is not implied by this that these extra-scientific assumptions should be laid before the reader with the exactness and clarity of a text-book, but rather that they



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should be available to him by inference from the information available to him. Any other procedure is the evocation of a minor miracle.

An SF story (or any story) ought, I feel, to have a coordinate system, though a more complex one that exceeds space and time. These latter parameters are insufficient in speculative fiction, or indeed in any fiction. There is a necessity for modalities and traits of character, and these in some sense or other locate the personae within the story. Quite crudely, they inform that this character is the protagonist and that this one is the antagonist, as well as other things.

But this frame is nondeterministic to a degree, and there must be ambiguities, there must be paradoxes. There must be, in SF, miracles. If there are too many one approaches chaos, a pure randomness, and there is always the possibility that one miracle may contradict another one. After all, in elementary logic one learns that a false proposition implies any proposition, even the contrary of itself, and all miracles are false propositions in the real world.

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*I find your thesis fascinating—largely for the way in which you've codified and restated in more abstract terms something most sf and fantasy writers have taken for granted for years, but perhaps never consciously articulated.*—TW

Ted,

I realized just recently that AMAZING/FANTASTIC was my favorite magazine. This was a bit of a surprise because I had been thinking of it as essentially a pulp reprint magazine. I shouldn't have been caught off guard because I've been reading A/F since you took over as editor. So I got out all my back-issues and went through them, trying to sort out my misconceptions and laying better bases for what appeared to be accurate perspectives.

In the first place, it is *not* because of the short stories; I've enjoyed few of those published since November '69 when you went to one reprint an issue. This is partly because I rarely enjoy short stories (by which I mean any work shorter than a novelette)—currently Larry Niven is the only writer that I always enjoy in the shorter lengths. Even so, hardly an issue of *Galaxy/If* goes by without at least one enjoyable short story. I haven't been able to analyze to my satisfaction why this should be so, but I did notice that while the short stories in A/F have gotten more imaginative and more experimental in recent years, I've enjoyed them less. Perhaps I'm just too stodgy, but I suspect there is a deeper explanation for this dissatisfaction. I would appreciate any light you can shine on the subject.

I do like the serials, which are consistently the best novels published in the prozines. (Strange; I've been enjoying those in *Galaxy/If* less and less.) But for me it is the letter columns, editorials, and articles that make A/F special, with their central focus on literary and scientific matters relevant to science fiction. In short, I see your magazine as fan-oriented. I mean that in a sense wider than you might think, considering your estimate of the number of hardcore fans at not much over a thousand. There are many more thousands who will likely never join a fan club, attend a convention, or even write a letter who nevertheless enjoy reading about SF and the ideas and issues raised by it as much as they do actually reading it.

In contrast, *Galaxy/If* has shoestring editorials and letter columns and only rarely a feature article. *F&SF* has Baird Searles's movie column, which is only of minor interest to me since most SF movies are so awful (though things have been getting better in the last few years). It also has Asimov's science articles, but the Good Doctor's marvelously clear exposition is pedagogical rather than speculative. (Also, I positively detest most of *F&SF's* short stories. Further evidence of a constipated imagination?) *Analog's* science articles would be a credit to *Scientific American*;



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they are not a credit to an SF magazine. The editorials are didactic, and the short stories, novels, and letter column all share a common malaise I call the Campbell Syndrome.

At this point let me make a few things clear. I liked John Campbell personally the one time I had the opportunity to spend a few hours with him. For a long time the most precious possession I had was sixteen years of *ASF*, bound and frequently re-read. I always read the editorials first; I got a lot out of them. In fact, much of my personality and intellect was shaped by John Campbell, and I grieve that he is gone.

But I am glad he is no longer editor of *Analog*. I grew up (part-way; I hope never to stop), but *Analog* did not. I can no longer enjoy stories based on the premise that this galaxy will be colonized by white male Anglo-Europeans clad in diving suits and riding poorly-disguised versions of the V2 rocket, whose primary vices are alcohol, cigarettes, and a compulsion to explain familiar details to each other. Almost all of *ASF's* later stories seemed to take place in such a Universe, and I got pretty tired of it after a while.

Now that I've written that, it occurs to me that not only I grew up but that Campbell grew down in the last half-decade of his life. Under him *ASF* regressed, in two seemingly contradictory ways. Its stories tended more toward those of *ASF's* childhood, its nonfiction toward the more "adult" nonspeculative science. Both are indications of what might be called pre-senility, a hardening of the arteries of intellect that drove top writers like Robert Heinlein and Robert Silverberg out of the pages of *ASF* and kept out Philip José Farmer and Fritz Leiber. It made me cut out of my life something I had come to believe a constant. Maybe, soon, *Analog* will be a magazine I can read again.

Let's turn to a happier topic: the August '72 FANTASTIC cover. It's excellent. Of course, the painting is by Jeff Jones, but it is the discreet integration of the cover printing (indicia? logo?) [*Logo.*—TW] with the illustration that most impressed me. The bold black "FANTASTIC" (and "A new CONAN novel") identifies the magazine instantly from a distance and the smaller olive story titles and authors' names resolve away from the illustration at closer approach to give detailed information. It is small personal touches like this monthly redesign of the type to match the illustration that give A/F its impression of vitality and its attraction to me. (I mention the cover also because I prefer the softer, subtler style of Jones to that of Hinge, and would like to see more of it.)

I would like to see more discussion of the fantasy and SF in underground comics, which I've just discovered. The only reason I can see why all of you are spending so much time discussing crap like *Green Lantern* is that you have not discovered the undergrounds yet. Some of them offer almost every good quality the super-hero comics lack. They portray sex and violence much more realistically, have imaginative and carefully worked-out story backgrounds, and a superb grasp of graphic art. Their primary fault is that they are as hung up on pessimism and horror as the regular comics are on sweetness and light.

Vaughn Bodé's comic art is familiar to most fans, and perhaps that of George Metzger, creator of the *Moondog* series. One artist I think you, Ted, should get acquainted with if you are not already is Richard Corben, who is doing a comics version of Philip José Farmer's book *A Feast Unknown*. He would be an excellent addition to the pages of A/F. His *Fantagor* series contains the most skillful cartoon art I've yet seen. His art possesses almost cinematic pacing and framing, almost photographic rendition, whether in line drawings or wash. He must spend an enormous amount of time on it. Just one example of his skill: a fight scene in a dimly-lit castle. It is painted in white and black with almost no gray scale, the subjects predominantly side-lit. That is, it's painted in white on black rather than the usual black on white. It is a perfect example of the combination of naturalistic imagery that yet retains the elegant—almost stark—economy



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of the cartoon. It is this style that I expect will predominate in computer-generated movies.

In Benford's and Book's "Man's Best Friend" in AMAZING several months back they expressed the precise essence of the Communication Revolution, a principle so important I think it deserves repetition—the separation of information manipulation from matter manipulation. Instead of hiring 1000 extras, renting 1000 horses, buying 1000 costumes, and rehearsing (at *least* once!) an archaic battle scene between two barbarian hordes, a movie maker should be able to draw one figure, order a computer to duplicate it 1000 times with random variations in each copy, and program a battle exactly as he wants it, filmed from any viewpoint (for instance, as it might look to an alien observation post buried *under* the battle-field). Or in more mundane terms, why drive across town for information when you can phone?

Benford and Book slipped up on a couple of details in the section on computer-generated movies, however. Contrary to them, the translation of images to computer-manipulable form and back again is the easiest part of the computer-animation process. In fact, this capability was available before computers were. One of the first facsimile systems was a digital one. Called the Bartlane system, it transmitted almost 500 photographs through the Atlantic sumarine cables between 1921 and 1939. Today such disciplines as photo-telemetry use very sophisticated equipment and techniques to digitize, enhance, and analyze still and motion pictures. One of these, for example, is a computer program that converts an image into contours bounded by points at which light intensities change—that is, the computer "sees" line drawings! (This feature is being studied for possible use as part of the perceptron system on the independently-functioning Mars landers.)

Benford and Book predicted the 1980s as the likely time for the emergence of a commercial computer-animation system. They will be pleased to know they were too pessimistic. Today there are not one, but *two* companies that sell and lease such equipment. The Evans and Sutherland Corporation makes Line Drawing System-One. The major component of this system is a digital computer that incorporates hardware (rather than the much slower software) image-processing programs. The speed of hardware is combined with the flexibility of software by interfacing LDS-1 with almost any general-purpose digital computer. The multi-processor thus formed is capable of high-precision realtime simulation.

The other company is Computer Image Corporation, with offices in Hollywood, Denver, and New York (where it is listed as Dolphin/Computer Image). In some ways their system, called Scanimate, is considerably more primitive than LDS-1, and in others more sophisticated. This derives from CIC's purpose: animation (a computationally much simpler process than simulation) of less realistic figures than LDS-1 would be used for, figures (such as cartoons) that use visual short-hand to represent objects and actions. Scanimate, except for input-output devices, is complete in itself and is essentially a small analog computer. Two Scanimates may be combined to create more complex animation. One may handle foreground and the other background, for instance. A number of the animated effects on TV recently were produced with Scanimate, including the lead/tail cartoon for *The Great American Dream Machine*, commercials for Excedrin, Clairol, and the Pontiac Ventura, and a public-service spot for the National Campaign for the March of Dimes. CIC is in the process of designing and re-designing (they have one working model) a more advanced system they call Caesar, which will combine Scanimate with a digital computer to form a hybrid system.

Computer-generation of movies is only one of the technologies that will revolutionize film and TV in this decade. These include much lighter and cheaper TV cameras made possible by solid-state image sensing (being pioneered now by Bell Labs), flat TV



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screens (Owen-Illinois/Corning Glass is now manufacturing several sizes and shapes of their Digivue plasma-panel—which has color but no gray scale—for computer displays), efficient light-pipe signal transmission with its enormous capacity, and a plethora of magnetic and electro-optic storage media, the most recently-publicized being those in cassette form. Cassettes (and, a little later in the decade, mass-storage systems randomly accessible via two-way cable) should be of special interest to SF fans, because they promise the transformation of film and TV into a specialty rather than mass market, making "real" SF movies at last a paying proposition. At least, that is what I am gambling on; I have chosen cinema as a profession, and I hope to primarily make SF and fantasy films.

The knocking-around in my subconscious of the commercial success of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (a four-for-one return so far on an eleven-million-dollar investment) must have helped persuade me. Since I made my decision almost three years ago the success of other SF movies has made me a little more confident that I won't starve. Apart from the monster and occult crap there've been such movies as *Clockwork Orange*, *The Illustrated Man*, *Silent Running*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, and *The Andromeda Strain*. *Dune*, *The Hobbitt*, and *The Door into Summer* are slated to become movies. The director (John Borman) and one of the stars (Burt Reynolds) of *Deliverance* are committed to make an SF movie called *Zardoz*. George C. Scott will star and Douglas Trumbull will direct *Day of the Dolphin*. In the wake of *Star Trek* TV is bursting out with SF pilots like measles. (Most of them are about as irritating as measles, too.) The most promising TV series planned is *The Starlost*, a combined BBC-20th Century Fox effort with Harlan Ellison contracted to write 6 of the 26 episodes and Douglas Trumbull to be the executive producer. Even the theatre this season has some SF efforts, most of which are bombing but at least one (based, I believe, on a novel by Avram Davidson) has been well received both commercially and critically. And to top it all off, *X-1* is back on radio.

All of this means, I think, that SF has penetrated the public consciousness much more than we ever suspected, and the results of this exposure has not been a cheapening of the core that we cherish but an enhancement. Perhaps the most convincing way I can express this feeling is to say that, despite its faults, when it was over I cried at the beauty of the film *Silent Running*. A few years ago I would have laughed at the suggestion than an SF movie could affect me so deeply.

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*No, I am not unaware of the underground comics, which I've been following since the first* Zap. *Ron Turner of Last Gasp/Ecco Funnies sent me review copies of a number of recent releases, including several of Corben's works, which I hope to review here soon. I agree with your high opinion of Corben's work. And recently I shared the podium at the University of Maryland's Minicon with Denis Kitchen, of Kitchen Sink Enterprises and Krupp Comic Works, for a discussion of the economics of underground comics publishing. What most fascinates me about the underground comics phenomenon is the way in which new and viable channels for distribution are being developed. It seems to me that the potential audience for magazine sf and underground comics strongly overlap, and that it might be possible to produce an "underground" sf magazine to sell through these channels. We shall see. (I was undecided about which magazine in which to print your letter, Larry—your comments bridge them both and you refer to* FANTASTIC *and* AMAZING *as a single unit—but your comments on sf in the visual media decided me: you've supplied the closing comments on a theme which begins in the editorial, and thus your letter nicely rounds out the issue.)*—TW



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Editorial (cont. from page 4)
by the volume of the mail I received and by the attendance figures for the Star Trek conventions, two of the biggest of which were held in New York City and drew quite a few thousand attendees.

The loyalty of these fans was put to the test on March 23rd, when Gene Roddenberry unveiled the pilot for a new TV series which is slated to go on the air this fall—*Genesis II*.

I am happy to report that the impact of this program upon my household was so great that no one thought to watch it, and thus my own opinion of the pilot is unsullied in any fashion. I *have* heard a few reactions to it from local Trekkies (opinions were divided) and shortly after it was broadcast I received a long letter about the show from Michael Girsdansky, which will follow.

Girsdansky will be remembered by readers of the early-1960's issues of *Worlds of Tomorrow* (under Fred Pohl's editorship) as an author of science articles and speculative essays. He is removed by a decade or two from the age of the average *Star Trek* fan and confesses, "For better or worse, English is not my first language, and even though I now speak it without an accent and without noticeable Franco-Russo-Germanicisms, I still have an unsuccessful running gun-battle mit shpelling. More to the point: this was batted out in about 45 minutes with a sense of outrage difficult to put on paper without risk to you for printing obscenity, or me for libel." And he adds, "As my distant French relative once wrote: Sorry for the length of the letter; I didn't have time to write a short one." The bulk of the remainder of this editorial, then, will be Girsdansky's.

DEAR TED:

Although I still retain a greater measure of affection for *Star Trek* than do you, after this evening's débacle on our (Albany CBS) Channel 10, from 9:30 till 11:00, I begin to repent me in dust and ashes of any good thought I might have thought concerning The Roddenberry That Walketh in Darkness. Mea maxissima culpa, my most grievous sin!

I refer, of course, to *Genesis II;* to my mind at least, *Abortion I.* (Held I the same opinion of *Trek* as yours, it would be *Abortion II.*) (By a curious coincidence, Abort is the German word for toilet: literally, "away-place." And the TV this evening was definitely a place from which to be away. The Mighty Carson Art Players were rather funny, though, with their take-off on *Kung Fu.* Come to think of it: Lincoln Enterprises is hawking kitscherie for *Trek, Search, Genesis,* and *Kung Fu.* I wonder . . .)

Given the double naval of Lyra-a, the "half-human, half-mutant" hemidemisemivillainness (Lyra-a is her name, neither a component of a double star, nor a dentist's request to "gargle, please"), maybe the disaster should have been call *Genitals II.* Alas, no! So far as the eye could see, duplication of sex objects went no souther than the bellybutton. I am planning, incidentally, to translate a little-known work of Spengler's, an extended addendum to *The Decline of the West,* on this target of lechery; the title in the original runs, "Der Herumgang der Bauchenknoepfe." Vonnegut could probably supply you with a translation of that, if he ever deigned to acknowlege s-f in any form.

By the way; that "half-human, half-mutant" epithet fascinates me. Half-mutant *what?* Aardvark? Albeit just a teensie-weensie dead from the neck up, Lyra-a struck me as rather attractive in a horsey way

ENUF! Enought of just plain outrage and disappointment, anyway. Though there are a number of valid points implicit in the above jocosity, I should like to be serious and straightfacedly angry for a few paragraphs.

Item: Even today, in 1973, Latin is a nigh-dead tongue even for reading purposes, *even in Europe,* aside from classical scholars. Even on the other side of the water, your anti-science "humanist" (and I know I am doing true humanism injustice, hence the quotation-marks), knows little if any of it,



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nowadays. Why the "Primus" title for the Grand High Lama—oops, sorry Jaffe and Boyer; I meant the Collective Chairmen of the Board for Pax, the nation of Good Guys? Why "Pax" for that matter? (At least "Pax" is given a quasi-classical pronunciation, to rhyme appropriately enough with "pox." And in the next breath—or a few decades of minutes later at least—to have a gaggle of starlets traipse in, eyeballs all following the TelePrompter all the way, greeting the Primepersons as "Primi," the final vowel rhyming with the last one in "pig-sty"! Ach weel! there is a divinity that shapes our vowel movements, rough-hew them as one will.)

Item: What the hell kind of technology/technologies is/are supporting the jernt/jernts? Pax lives amidst a set of papier-maché caverns, mit upper-middle-class East-Side N.Y. Jewish apartment balconies yet—though in papier-maché boulderese, evenso. The Tyran(n)ians, the baddies—and did they name *themselves*, presumably knowing Latin, or is that just the Pax-marks name for them?—on the other hand have enough remembrance of things past to keep up the tradition of stressed-concrete Durell/Stone/Lloyd-W/etc. whorehouse-Bauhaus modernism. The baddies also have access to a type of zap-gun which would put modern laser technology to shame, yet are presumably looking for some weapon with which to attack and wipe out the culture of . . .

. . . aha! . . .

Pax. Now it suddenly dawns on one. Somebody—Roddenberry, I guess, since he is credited with "creating" and "writing" this Meisterstueck—has figured out that "Pax" is Old High Lithuanian or whatever for "peace." You would never guess it, up till the last minute, that Pax was a thoroughgoing Ghandian society, non-violent at all cost. Those teams of infiltrators into Tyran(n)ia and all. (Because if *that* gaff had been blown, where would Roddenberry, the actors, and the network have been for the rest of the 90 minutes, once the first half-hour had revealed the psychology of the first culture?) It will take someone a hell of a lot smarmier and dumber than Ted Sturgeon or Harlan Ellison (even nominally credited) to paint himself or herself out of a corner like that. On the other hand, LeGuins, Sturgeons, Nortons, Ellisons, *und so weiter* are usually just writers. They're not that funny (ha-ha) kind of beast: the writer-producer-executive producer.

In point of fact (and Ghandi me no Ghandis: the British/India situation was a thing conditioned more on economics and domestic sociological conditions than on "good-will"), in *Gen II*, the baddies would have had little trouble simply walking in and killing and/or enslaving the Paxians. Given their deep-black-painted culture (anthropologically meant, that last word), they would have had less trouble than Der Dritte Reich annihilating India, had the Reich had the chance.

Item (small, but amusingly revealing): In the last 15 minutes of *Gen II*, the good grey subordinate Yulov (?) shows the defrosted-from-deepsleep "hero," Dylan Hunt, around through the caverns of Pax. The bloody little silent two-man vehicle, with its World's Fair, N.Y. '39 *art modern* stylization, reminds me of nothing so much as the U-Bump-'em trolley-powered ride I once had fun in at some amusement park when I first came to the United States—and which I believe was the sort still in operation until the death of Palisades Amusement Park (". . . Come all day an' after dark, *dum*-tee-dum-tee-dum-tee-tee-tee-*dum* . . .")

For a supposedly esthetically oriented culture, Pax has the sensibility of a Sam Goldwyn—or perhaps a Gene Roddenberry. No outlet rises higher than its source, and a man capable of *The Making of Star Trek* (with CAPITAL LETTERS FOR THE WORDS OF THE SHOW'S GENE-HOVAH) is, almost by definition, capable of even a *Genesis II*.

Item: As long as we are perched behind Yulov's U-Bump-'em kart: (1) Y. flashlights a young couple necking (nothing more!), and comments with all the shy/sly



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disingenuousness of Madam Minnie at her House of All Nations that, "the younger people are giving up the unisex ideal—and the Primes approve!" (2) Y. flash-lights a goodly portion of what seems to be a small chamber-music group, the music played being (2a) I'm not sure what, but a deepfrozen bit, and the principally highlighted player being (2b) a rather sleek-looking brunette thigh-hugging a viola (?) and looking like either something from central casting or Charlotte Morman playing above-water and with coverage for *la poitrine*. (3) Somewhere during this Coney-Island farrago, Y. mumbles (through the accent, it's hard to make out the precise words) something about, "a new poetry."

(3—con't): Jocko, there *ain't* no such animal as "*a* new poetry." Given the diversity of accents—and they are, I assure you, genuine to the various speakers, in most cases—one has two choices. Either Pax has, one hopes, maintained a variety of different languages going within its culture(s), or the generation being portrayed is the last to speak a variety of tongues. In either case, "*a* poetry" is likely not to exist. Try French or Japanese for syllable-counting, the latter also for a slight degree of acoustic-pitch sense. Chinese for patterning in a rather complex way for tones. Spanish, Portuguese, or Italian, for formal rhyming plus (aside from free verse) "feet." Try English, with its grafted-on rhyme-and-feet, but its basic stress sense: from Beowulf to Manley Hopkins/Whitman, etc. No way. *That* assumes Pax is still polyglot. If the "new poetry" is a single one, according to the genius and structure of some common tongue (presumably English), how would someone with Yulov's troubles with English phonemes, rhythms, and word-junctures, to say nothing of cadences, have any way of telling the new from the old? I can assure you that, as one who learned French at the same time as English, Poe is great in the Baudelaire translation, but lousy in English.

Item, granted problematical, since this beastie, with more promised to come in the way of "spin-off" Paxian cultures:

*Race*—True enough, a black (Percy Rodrigues) is *primus inter pares*, the Head for Dear Ol' Pax. If *Genesis II*, as pilot for an upcoming (I almost wrote upchucking) series, propagates, what the hell will they do with that ostentatiously multiracial Board of Prim*igh*? If Pax is, in fact, *that* so liberated, one would imagine that there would be a blending. How come Ms. Fung-Wa, or whatever, is so purely Chinese? And so forth? Granted, a thoroughly libertarian culture would also respect the desires of many to "stay with their own kind" and avoid programmatic "liberal" idea of Rochelle Schwartz plus George Washington Jones, or Hugh MacDiarmid plus Hishito Watanabe. Even so, one would expect a certain degree of blending. Aside from Rodrigues, one finds that sort of biological heterosis (not a breath disease!) sorely lacking. And I suspect, no matter what number of sub-cultures of Pax one is introduced to in the series (perish forbid!)—and they promise many—it will be an absolute-zero day in July when you find black and white necking in the tunnels of Pax. Probably the same kind of prohibition will/would obtain in Tyran(n)ia, though I didn't notice any black mutants. Either blacks were incapable, in the projected world of the series, of becoming "mutant" (aardvarks?)—or, more likely, the word had got out: Roddenberry, you'll lose sponsors probably, and the series for sure. As you must know, Ted, *Friday Foster* is allowed anything in the comic-strip except miscegenation. I may be psychotic, but mark my words: in syndicated strips, fellatio and cunniligus may come(?), so long as the colors of shaft and cylinder match, or cheek and jowl, before any more conventional a coupling when the hues of frictioning thighs differ drastically in shade.

Item: Die ekksents in Pax!

"Singh" (Harvey Jason) isn't totally ridiculous as an India-Indian—but why not get a genuine Sikh? Or at least someone who really looked the part; someone who knew the left bank of the Hudson River from the



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Ganges? And given the libertarianism of Pax, what became of "Singh's" pony-tail, and the turban in which it would be wrapped up? And the beard, too? And given the pacifism of Pax, what the devil would the descendent of a Sikh be doing there? If his great-grand papa went Ghandiesque, why would the name be kept?—and it has *much* meaning. I can scarsely imagine a guy with any sense of his past and/or present culture keeping the name "lion."

"Yulov"—the good, grey tour-guide himself. Oddly enough, the only Romance-based culture in our present day in which that descendent of the Latin Julius is current is Spanish—Julio. Outside that culture, don't ask me why!, the name seems largely restricted to (1) Italians, in the form Giulio, even where it is far from the most common, and (2) among Jews of the Haskalah/Erklaerung/Eclaircissment/Englightenment: in such forms as Jules/Juliusz/Juliao/ and the like. In theory, there is no reason why a Russian name based on a (problematic) given-name Yul couldn't exist. (Come-to think of it, Yul Brynner???) But if my Russian-speaking (sic!) ear doesn't mistake me, I should think that the final L in such a name would be "soft"—transcribed as Yul', with the final "apostrophe" standing for the Russian character myaghki znak, and hence turning a traditional name into something like "Yuliev/Yulieff." "Yulov" would seem to me impossible. And whatever the subtleties of that bit of linguistics—the joker playing "Yulov" seems to me far more to come from Pirefs in Greece, than from somewhere where any kind of Slavic tongue is spoken, or will be.

Item: Das Gesicht unseres Heldes—or; The Face of Our Hero—und seine Name: That little bit of Roddenburying is something for which the Phoenecians would feel the need for inventing a new letter, were they still with us, rather than beplanted 'neath Tunis, thanks to Cato and the Second Punic. Roddenberry was smooth as a baby's butt while being immortalized for *The Making of Star Trek*, and presumably during the inception of the pilot *Trek* itself. Given what comes over through relentless promos and shlock offers, as Roddenberry's aggrandizing and self-congratulatory personality, very much on the alert to what and who will sell, I would not in the last be surprised to learn that he now is hirsuitier. Nothing wrong with that, per se; but the reflection of the Now Generation in Our Hero is a bit much. He seems a good deal less the Scientist than the Swinger, longish hair and droopy mustache included. For a lad with the name Dylan Hunt, he projects a decidedly ethnic image, more reminiscent of an ungodly cross between Joe Namath and N.Y.C.'s ex-Environmental Quality Commish Jerry Kretchmer. I could far more easily envisage him at Elaine's than at Princeton, more likely a martini, roach or chick's bazoom in his hands than slide-rule or pipette. In fact, with one exception—see below—Hunt/Namath/Kretchmer seems almost the only one in futuria able to grow more than a skull-cap of hair, all other males being decidedly on the jock model, with lips as innocent of pelosity as Genesis's makers of esthetic sense or feeling for plausibility.

Our Hero's name itself is something of a give-away as to the psychology of the Roddenberrys of this world: determinedly with-it, although unfortunately and invariably a few years behind the times. Really hep! I rather suspect that Roddenberry et alii don't know that Dylan was a Welsh sea-figure; I suspect also that they may have heard there was a poet named Dylan Thomas—and am even surer that few if any of that gang read much (if any) of his work; but I am *certain* that R & Co. have heard of and listened to Bobbie Dylan. The metamorphosis from Robert Zimmerman of Minn. to Bob Dylan World Protest Figure and Folk Artist is completely in character. But Dylan Hunt, Boy Swinger-Scientist? As a sex-role switch, it's mildly (though probably unintentionally) funny. Something like Faith Domergue or the other intellectual beauties in cheap-jack s-f films, who were invariably encountered



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by some other "scientist" or naval reserve officer who—as inevitably as the tides rush up the bore of Fundy—was bound to say: "You know, with your glasses off, you're a completely different person." Dissolve. I tend to, at such moments.

Item: . . . O the hell with it. This could keep up ad nauseam, and ad the nauseam I just about am. But one more bit of klutzerei typical of the lads and lasses who put this monster ("But Dr. Frankenstein, there are certain things men weren't meant to know!") together. The one Paxian I noticed who was not an old Arrow Collar type, and one destined to re-appear if the show becomes a series (shudder) is a friendly, deepvoiced and rather "philosophical" giant named (sic) Isiah. Though his face be cleanshavened, he *does* have a rather stylish Prince Val page-boy, complete with filet round the brow. It's Ted Cassidy. The only problem for me is that, as a fan of the now re-runned *Addams Family* show, I can't help but recall Lurch, the butler. No matter how noble his sententiousness when saying something on the order of "It is better to avoid stepping on the shins of a flea than to defecate in the nostrils of a triceratops," I keep expecting to see him materialize in tuxedo, rumbling, "Youuuuuu rang?"

I SEE, in retrospect, that I've passed over a number of other issues, such as—*why* are the Tyran(n)ians baddies? Had Roddenberry any fine-grainedness at all, he might build up an authentic tension between two societies, at least among the more sensitive members of each, with Tyran(n)ia something of a Sparta. We forget that, to themselves, the Spartans has a good way of life; moreover, Sparta was not always "spartan," having once differed not much from the other Greek city-states, Athens included. Like any other norm of national character, Sparta's ideal character was inculcated, not inborn. It is typical of bad written s-f and apparently pandemic in almost any visual s-f (with such flukey exceptions as part of *Forbidden Planet*, of all things) that character is not only simply "given," but usually genetic—and not only for the bug-eyed-monsters, either. You just *knew* that Donald Pleasance was a baddie: he wasn't nearly so handsome as the rest, and all that bad-mouthing God, *well!* . . .

One might (but probably won't) do something thoughtful with such ideas: the notions of a tension in some Tyran(n)ians, *and even Paxians*, between the norms of their culture(s) and some dimly perceived alternatives. What else is character-cum-learning but original Gestalt plus the possibility of change? Someone with a bit of perception (not Roddenberry, I wager) deftly slipped this hint into the background notes for *Trek*, in suggesting that Vulcan trained its population into emotional quietism. *That* voice was the voice of an at least marginal artist. The hand that explained away Spock's occasional waking into emotional vividity as a biological consequence of his half-human parentage was, however, I suspect the hand of Esau, otherwise known as G.R.

Really heretical: the idea of some intelligent Paxian (gulp!), adrift and uneasy in freedom—yearning for the order of a Tyran(n)ia? In fact, I should not be overwhelmed if Roddenberry and/or one of the typewriter peasants on the estate eventually come up with this radical transvaluation of all values. But mark my words: the "out-opter" will turn out to be soft in the head, or will learn the folly of the choice—either repent and return, or repent and expiate through immolation. The idea that a Paxian might "go over" and actually stick with the choice would, I have a hunch, be a bit too much for the good (?) grey fathers at Roddenberry's, CBS, and other assorted mesquinerie who call the tune.

So what do we have once more? Goodies vs. Baddies. White Hats vs. Black. With few exceptions, and those paltry, even Ol' *Trek* itself never tried to make the Klingons' view of things real. That would have required the interjection of character, complexity, ambiguity, some degree of psychological validity. Even a Joe Conrad, hating the Russian



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Empire, could show the grey shades of revolutionary politics in *Under Western Eyes.* Roddenberry, even with the cop-out of futurity? No way!

Well, an aware bloc of mutants doesn't vote, phone in ratings, nor protest or confront. Roddenberry has nothing to worry about on *that* score. His only fear will probably be as to whether or not sufficient viewers will be reflected in the ratings. In large measure, I suspect—and, regretfully, hope—the show will fail. Regretfully, because I happen to love s-f. Hopefully, because this thing is a disaster and an insult. A disaster because of its many defects, only some of which I've touched on in this already too-long letter. An insult, because, in spite of all the pieties dropped into *The Making of Star Trek,* I suspect that Roddenberry doesn't much understand or care for the genre, but was amazed at the loyalty of what was an exceptionally vocal, yet not, after all, that large (TV-wise) an audience. Given that kind of loyalty, I imagine Roddenberry was geniunely disappointed and disconcerted when his franchise was yanked.

Whatever the Roddenberry-rumours, his creation of *Genesis II* inclines me to believe them. His response: keep the (to-Roddenberry) s-f element, but hype it up. Make the hero "with it": juice up the sex interest, duplicate umblici, and all; make even more cartoon-like the dividing-line between Vice and Virtue.

And—you fans may have noticed—make instant memorabilia available. At a price, of course. As I mentioned in the second paragraph of this letter, Lincoln Enterprises is not only hawking glossies, scripts (in various stages of development), and the like for such shows as *Trek, Search,* and *Kung Fu.* This, although a bit shabby and sleazy, has some minimal connection with reality. But, friends, *Genesis II* is also being sold. You may have the dubious pleasure of buying the relics of a program which may (I hope) not come to fruition. Small problem for fans: how does one keep up a fanmag for an unbeboobtubed show? Roddenberry und Aktiengesellschaft will probably find a way.

Perhaps I am doing Roddenberry an injustice. Not being a super-powered "mutant" complete with hot-and-cold running telepathy, I cannot say. If Roddenberry does not, in fact, simply try to exploit, then I can come to only one conclusion: he suffers from both a tin ear and rusted mind.

But I wonder . . . Has Roddenberry in fact quite accurately gauged the quality of mind of his audience? Those who "like s-f" without any thought but an intellectual parlour-game? Some comparable to the "murder in the vicar's garden" mystery fans, so totally enraged at the thought of bringing reality into the mystery genre by a Hammett, a Chandler? Such would not, by definition, be Archie Bunkers of the soul. Jacques Barzun, for one, is an afficionado of the "classic mystery," as was Woodrow Wilson. (Not Edmund, though!)

Perhaps Roddenberry is right, after all. Though I dislike much of the "New Wave," whatever it is, perhaps the plaints of its practicioners that "standard s-f" is simply the resort of those with half a sensibility to an audience of their peers may, in fact, be a valid insight and criticism.

In which case, some of us will have withdrawn even from participation. Certainly in terms of TV and the cinema. If *Genesis II* keeps up as it has begun, I can think only of a remark made by Clemenceau, but probably before, by another: "Every people gets the rulers it deserves."

I hope we deserve better.

Michael Girsdansky
Springfield Center, N.Y.

SINCE I AM SITTING THIS ONE OUT, all brickbats, bombs, and other suspicious packages will be forwarded directly to Girsdansky. Letters, on the other hand, will be published in *According To You,* both pro and con.

THIS ISSUE AND NEXT: Our cover this issue is by Joe Staton—his debut in the sf field. Joe,



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who has done interior art for us for about a year now, is a sf fan whose work still appears in some of the better fanzines and whose professional appearances have been largely in the pages of Charleton comics, for whom he did *Primus*, based on the TV series of the same name. Before you ask, no, the cover does not illustrate a specific story in this issue. And yes, this is often the case, since we usually buy our covers independantly and either try to fit them to stories already on hand, as with our April cover by Moroto, or give them to authors to write stories around them. (There are exceptions. Mike Kaluta's painting on our February issue was done specifically for Sprague de Camp's *The Fallible Fiend*, and Harry Roland's cover, last issue, was done for the Conan story although he did it as *a* Conan painting and not for the specific story.) Joe sold us two paintings, one of which appears on the cover of this issue simply because we liked it and felt it offered a change of pace. (His second will be on the cover of our sister magazine, AMAZING SF, one of these months, with a new Grant Carrington story written specifically to go with it.)

This issue also marks the conclusion of the Panshins' "The Son of Black Morca"—a novel which I think you will agree is in every way extraordinary for a story at least nominally "heroic fantasy". The Panshins tell me that this novel is projected to be the first of a tetralogy (not a trilogy, as I remarked a few issues ago)—four novels which will tell a much larger tale. They have also assured me that we will see each novel in turn (when written) in these pages. Having been a part of the tetralogy's gestation, some five years ago, I am as eager as anyone to see the next novel, but the Panshins' commitments to other works (they are still polishing *The World Beyond the Hill*, their massive work about sf for Scribners which is based in part on their *SF in Dimension* columns, recently concluded here) may force us all to wait a while.

In the meantime, our lead novella next issue will be, as I mentioned two issues back, Jack Dann's "Junction." It weighs in at thirty thousand words and will be complete in one issue. Basically the story of what the universe might be like if cause and effect break down, it is at once complex and compelling—and I think it's a story you'll be talking about for years to come. Watch for it.

—TED WHITE

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The Nights (cont. from page 50)

northman asked.

"Indeed! A one-man army on that battlefield. There's a problem, though. He abstained so long he can't father children. He doesn't know, I'm sure." A strange light twinkled in the Princess's eyes as she added, "It's a pity. He wants more children. So do I, but I just don't know how we'll manage . . . ."

"If I can be of any help . . . ."

Deep in the dungeons, Aristithorn hummed to himself as he tossed wriggling mice to his vampire bats while watching a garden scene in a magicical mirror . . .

He'd lied when he said he was retiring.

Celibacy has nothing to do with his kind of magick.

He'd known of his sterility.

Trust a wizard no more than a King. They're all chess players.

—GLEN COOK



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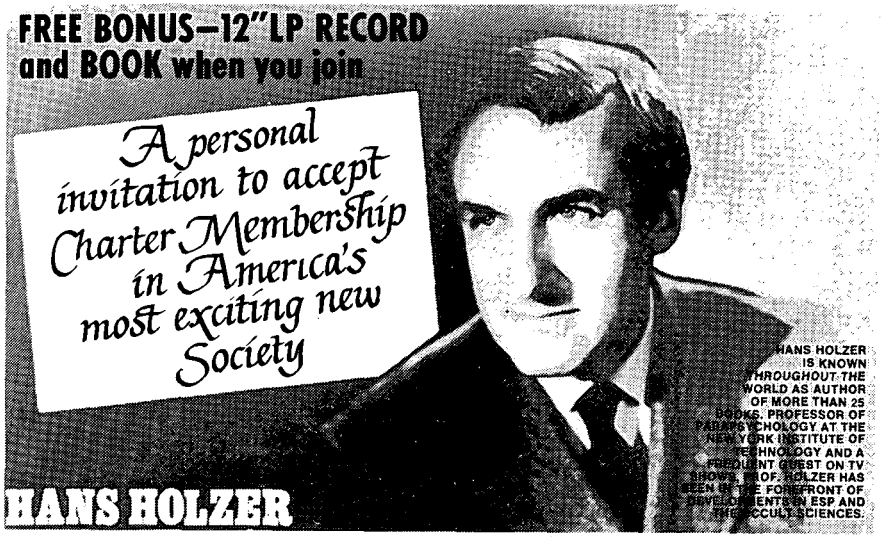
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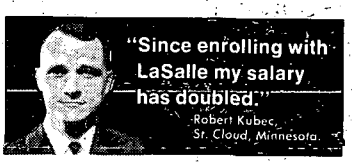


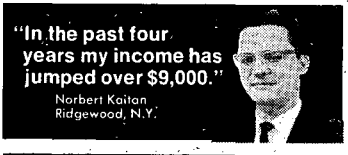


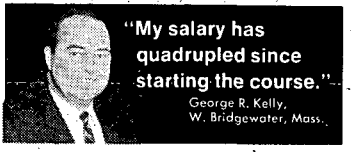


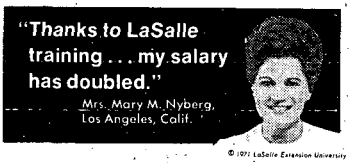


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